

Few Salespeople See Value in Paying for Premium LNKD Account

Companies: CRM, FB, GOOG, LNKD, ORCL, TWTR, VOCS

March 13, 2014

Research Question:

Is a premium LinkedIn account a must-have for salespeople?

Summary of Findings

- Sales professionals view [LinkedIn Corp.](#) (LNKD) as a useful tool but do not consider a [premium subscription](#) to be vital. Eight of 24 sales professionals interviewed for this report have a premium LinkedIn account, and only two—both in B2B sales—consider the paid subscription a key part of their sales efforts.
- Only five sales sources, all in B2B, use LinkedIn as a prospecting or lead-generation tool, and none rely on it to close deals. More often, sources reported using LinkedIn for maintaining relationships with existing customers, building credibility for themselves, educating people about their company, and participating in industry discussions—all of which can be done with a free account.
- Seven sources see the potential value of LinkedIn's [Sales Navigator](#) for generating leads, but only one currently pays for the social selling solution. Another is starting a free trial this month. Thirteen of 32 sources overall were not familiar with Sales Navigator.
- Eight sources who rely on [Salesforce.com Inc.](#) (CRM) for managing their pipeline of leads questioned whether also using LinkedIn adds value. Tighter integration with Salesforce could increase Sales Navigator's attractiveness, according to three sources.
- Most sources who see value in LinkedIn as a sales tool think it is more useful in B2B contexts, but some believe it could be helpful in selling professional services directly to consumers.
- LinkedIn users generally are receptive to being contacted by salespeople. The site's professional tone makes it a better bet than a cold call or email for getting a response.
- Sources reported minimal concern that an onslaught of sales pitches on LinkedIn might force users from the site; several noted that ignoring unwanted contacts is easy. However, one IT executive already flooded with phone and email solicitations said he would pull his LinkedIn profile if it were to become inundated with sales pitches.
- LinkedIn has adequate controls in place to discourage overuse of the site's messaging system. Two sales professionals said they had been warned by LinkedIn about sending too many connection invitations to people they did not know.

Silo Summaries

1) B2B Sales Professionals

Only two of 15 salespeople said a premium LinkedIn account was a key part of their lead-generating efforts. Five sources use the site to find potential customers, but most use LinkedIn for other purposes, such as maintaining relationships with existing clients or educating people about their services. Only eight sources had heard of Sales Navigator, and only one currently pays for the solution. **No source was concerned that salespeople might inundate LinkedIn users with solicitations.** Eleven sources believe people are generally very open to being contacted through LinkedIn.

2) B2C Sales Professionals

Only two of these nine sources pay for a premium LinkedIn account, and **none considered it imperative to their B2C sales.** Also, **sources do not use the site directly for finding new clients;** instead, they rely on it for building their own credibility, screening vendors and sharing industry news. Two sources are considering a Sales Navigator subscription. Sources reported **minimal concern about excessive sales pitches** turning off LinkedIn users.

3) LinkedIn Users

All three sources, who tend to be on the receiving end of sales pitches, said **they generally are comfortable with being contacted via LinkedIn.** One, however, said **he would leave the site if it becomes overrun with solicitations.** Another said he does not mind sales contacts through LinkedIn because they are easy to ignore. Only one of the three sources pays for a premium LinkedIn account. One source thinks LinkedIn is a great tool for B2B sales, while another believes the Sales Navigator subscription could be attractive to sales professionals.

4) Industry Specialists

Three of these five sources consider LinkedIn a key resource for salespeople to generate leads; one even suggested that savvy sales professionals often pay for a premium LinkedIn account. One source was skeptical of LinkedIn's utility as a sales tool, but said **it has the most potential for B2B,** especially if it were to create an area to bring together salespeople with those interested in solicitations. **One source believes Sales Navigator could be helpful under the right conditions, but said it is expensive.** In general, LinkedIn users are receptive to being contacted by others on the site. LinkedIn has done a good job of controlling spam, according to one source.

	Premium LNKD Subscription a Must-Have	Value of LNKD's Sales Navigator	LNKD Users Open to Sales Pitches
B2B Sales Professionals	➔	➔	⬆️
B2C Sales Professionals	⬇️	⬇️	⬆️
LinkedIn Users	⬇️	⬇️	⬆️
Industry Specialists	➔	➔	⬆️

Background

LinkedIn is the place for [white-collar professionals](#), and the company hopes to benefit from the changing sales landscape, in which social media is [usurping](#) cold calling. In a [survey by Putnam Investments](#), 66% of financial advisors who use LinkedIn do so to find new clients.

LinkedIn's Sales Navigator is a social selling tool aimed at helping salespeople identify and contact key decision makers. The company rolled out the feature in 2012 but plans to increase its promotional efforts in the coming months. LinkedIn's own salespeople [reported a 50% increase](#) in converting leads into meetings when they started using the Sales Navigator solution.

The Sales Navigator umbrella comprises several subscription levels: Sales Basic (\$19.95/month), Sales Plus (\$49.95/month) and Sales Executive (\$99.95/month) are offered to users with free LinkedIn accounts. Meanwhile, Sales Pro (\$399.95) is offered to those looking to upgrade from an existing premium subscription. The various subscriptions give users access to different search filters and put different limits on use of the site's [InMail and Introductions](#) features.

In its [recently released fourth-quarter earnings](#), LinkedIn reported significant year-to-year growth in all three of its key revenue streams: talent solutions for recruiters, marketing solutions for advertisers and premium subscriptions.

The increased emphasis on LinkedIn as a sales tool could result in a flood of unwanted contact from aggressive salespeople and turn users off of the platform. Any drop in membership or active users could render LinkedIn a less effective social tool and result in fewer premium subscriptions. The premium account search filters reportedly are more geared toward [recruiters and human resources](#).

Blueshift Research's [Dec. 18, 2012 report](#) focused on LinkedIn's status within and usage by the hiring community. None of the five staffing agencies and only one of four job seekers interviewed by Blueshift preferred LinkedIn over other hiring sites. However, four of six HR managers and two of three industry specialists said it was the favored recruitment tool.

Current Research

In this study, Blueshift Research explored how salespeople are using LinkedIn, whether they value a paid subscription and whether users have concerns about an increase in sales pitches on the site. We employed our pattern mining approach to establish five independent silos, comprising 32 primary sources and six secondary sources focused on social selling and LinkedIn's Sales Navigator:

- 1) B2B sales professionals (15)
- 2) B2C sales professionals (9)
- 3) LinkedIn users (3)
- 4) Industry specialists (5)

5) Secondary sources (6)

Next Steps

Blueshift Research will explore whether LinkedIn's increased promotional efforts, including a free 30-day trial of Sales Navigator, will increase awareness and understanding of its social selling platform. We will determine whether a better publicized and more intuitive integration with Salesforce.com's CRM software could boost interest in LinkedIn's Sales Navigator. Lastly, we will assess whether the number of solicitations through LinkedIn is becoming a significant turnoff for its users.

Silos

1) B2B Sales Professionals

Only two of 15 salespeople said a premium LinkedIn account was a key part of their lead-generating efforts, although six sources in total pay for a subscription. Five sources use the site to find potential customers, but most use LinkedIn for other purposes, such as maintaining relationships with existing clients or educating people about their services. Only eight sources had heard of Sales Navigator, and only one currently pays for the solution. One soon will start a free Sales Navigator trial, another said the product is desirable but out of his price range, while a third said he would consider using it only if it were easily accessible through Salesforce.com. No source was concerned that salespeople might inundate LinkedIn users with solicitations and scare them from the site. Four said such sales pitches are easily ignored. Eleven sources believe people are generally very open to being contacted through LinkedIn, with three noting that such contacts are better received than cold calls or emails.

KEY SILO FINDINGS

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- 6 of 15 sources have a premium LinkedIn account but only 2 considered it crucial to their sales efforts.
- 5 use LinkedIn to generate sales leads.
- 7 find the site useful for maintaining relationships with existing customers and contacts.

Sales Navigator

- 8 are familiar with Sales Navigator.
- 1 currently pays for the solution; 1 would like to use Sales Navigator but can't afford it.
- 1 saw mediocre results with an earlier version of LinkedIn's sales tools but soon will start a free trial of Navigator.
- 1 said he would consider Sales Navigator only if it were tightly integrated with Salesforce.com.

Potential Pitfalls

- 11 believe people are generally receptive to being contacted via LinkedIn.
- No source was concerned about salespeople overusing the site for soliciting LinkedIn users.
- 4 said sales pitches on LinkedIn are easy to avoid or ignore.
- 1 said he was put on probation by LinkedIn for sending too many invitations to people he didn't know.

1. Sales director at a software security company

This source uses Sales Navigator to mine the LinkedIn database for relevant prospects, a vetting process to find the right people in an organization. LinkedIn is a good tool for identifying potential B2B customers, but is not useful for closing deals. He would like to see integration between Sales Navigator and Salesforce.com, his preferred solution for managing customer relationships.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I use LinkedIn mainly for research in our efforts to identify the best people to connect with in a company. Usually it’s someone in IT who is our initial point of contact. The Sales Navigator filtering tools are pretty good at narrowing the search, vetting for the right people and saving time.”
- “LinkedIn is a good promotional tool, but it’s not really going to help us close sales. That requires a much more high-touch approach.”
- “We do get inquiries through LinkedIn, but we still go through traditional channels to secure new business. At some point in the exchange, you have to pick up the phone and make personal contact. It’s not just that you have to; I think it’s an important part of the customer relationship.”

Sales Navigator

- “I’m paying about \$50 a month for this.”
- “Sales Navigator is fine for what it is, mainly as a people finder. I think you’re mainly paying for deeper access to the LinkedIn database.”
- “It’s a good research tool. I’m saving a lot of time that would otherwise be spent sifting through a lot of employees at an organization just to find the one person we need to know.”
- “This is not a replacement for Salesforce. I really wish we had an all-in-one solution that helped us find prospects and manage our customers in one app.”
- “You can customize Salesforce to suit your needs. The LinkedIn paid subscription unlocks more features, but you can’t customize them. You can build a lead list fairly quickly with reliable data, and that’s a benefit.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “Most people seem willing enough to connect on LinkedIn, but I think it’s becoming more discriminating. There’s got to be some relevance behind the connection, something of mutual benefit.”
- “I haven’t gotten too many sales pitches. You can change the settings to filter out a lot of unwanted contact.”
- “I’ve heard from a lot of people that they get hit with waves of job seekers trying to get in the door through LinkedIn, probably because it’s so easy to find someone and even easier to send your resume with an email.”
- “I don’t begrudge anybody trying to find a job, but that doesn’t mean I have the time to look at everything that lands in my inbox. Some people might feel differently, but I don’t see it as a problem right now.”

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*Sales Director
Software Security Company*

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Software Security Company*

2. Head of global sales for a major U.S. city’s convention authority

This source does not have a premium LinkedIn account and does not use the site for generating leads, partly because his agency already has an extensive contact database. People are more likely to respond to a LinkedIn message than a cold call, so the site could be a useful sales tool for a smaller convention bureau. Lately, he has been on the receiving end of a lot more solicitations through LinkedIn—a nuisance but not yet a reason to leave the site.

Linked as Sales Tool

- “I’ve only used LinkedIn a couple of times to solicit. That’s not my purpose right now.”
- “It’s not a strategic opportunity for me. It’s more of a tool.”
- “I just had my database scrubbed a year ago and came up with less than a 2% error rate, so it’s pretty good. We’re active in our database, and it’s pretty big. It’s over 27,000 companies just in the B2B space.”
- “It could work for a smaller convention and visitors bureau. It could help them identify some new prospects if they used it properly. I know there are ways to use it.”
- “One of the things that distinguishes LinkedIn from everything else is that everyone knows it’s a professional site. The behavior that I’ve seen on it has been very professional, and I really like that. That’s what my colleagues say as well.”
- “Typically, if you get a message via LinkedIn, most folks are not going to ignore it, especially if you know who it’s coming from. If you were to do it on some other platform, you wouldn’t get that type of success.”

- “I use the free [service] currently. I’ve been toying with the idea of a paid subscription, but for what I’m using it for right now, [the free version] works pretty well.”
- “I’m on LinkedIn every day. I use it to keep track of folks in the network. I’ve got a pretty big network, over 1,000 people, and I’ve got a lot of CEOs in my network. I use it if there’s a job change or somebody’s got a significant birthday and we haven’t chatted in a while. I’ll ping them and we’ll go from there.”
- “Yesterday I used it to communicate with a senior VP of marketing that had moved companies. If I hadn’t seen her name pop up on LinkedIn [as having changed jobs] I wouldn’t have thought of it.”
- “One of the boards I’m on has a pretty active group on LinkedIn, and I use it to keep in touch with that group. It loads it all into an area that I’m looking at, so instead of getting pounded by a bunch of emails, I can see what’s going on in that group.”
- “We don’t pay for any list builders, but we use [Trade Show News Network](#). We have access to their database. We also use [Knowland](#) as a solicitation tool; they go around and read message boards around the country. We put in specific criteria that we’re looking for, and that gives us information about who’s meeting where and at what time.”

Sales Navigator

- “I’ve seen the [Sales Navigator] button, but I haven’t done anything with it.”
- “There would be a little bit of a learning curve [with a tool like Sales Navigator]. I just don’t have a lot of time, so I haven’t dedicated myself to doing that.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “[Sales Navigator] may explain why I’m getting all these solicitations. I’m getting a lot more solicitations lately. Because I’m in the VP group, they all want to go after the folks that can make the decisions. It’s more annoying than anything. What I do now is just push back on everybody, especially the ones that are just sending me a general solicit. I tell them to go do their homework.”
- “I have to go in and figure out what my security settings are so I don’t get pounded so much. When I first started using LinkedIn, there was a company scraping my contacts and soliciting them. It was a little embarrassing.”

3. Sales manager for a developer of property management software

This source has a premium LinkedIn account, but does not use the site for generating leads and is considering ditching his paid subscription. He sees potential for a tool like Sales Navigator to help sales professionals qualify leads but only if it is tightly integrated with customer management software like Salesforce.com. He did not know of an efficient way to make such a connection between the two platforms. A well-crafted invitation to connect on LinkedIn can be a good way to start a conversation, but the simple act of connecting does little to improve the success rate of cold calls.

Linked in as Sales Tool

- “Having a LinkedIn account is a must. Having a paid account is not. It hasn’t been super-apparent to me that it’s something I need. I may very well go and bump it back [to a free account].”
- “I have a premium account. I pay \$50 per month.”
- “[What I get for the subscription fee] is a very good question, and I probably need to cancel it. [Subscribing] was really about being able to track who’s looking at my profile, but in an industry like mine, everyone knows everybody. I also wanted to have the ability for anyone to connect with me through [LinkedIn’s] [OpenLink](#) if they wanted to discuss a business development opportunity and to see who was out there [checking out my profile], and for connecting with other professionals after we’ve been connected through email or phone.”
- “[Using LinkedIn] has been about connecting my Gmail. If I have a meeting for that day, it sends a little reminder that I met with these people and maybe I want to connect with them.”
- “I have not been utilizing LinkedIn from an outbound perspective, finding nonqualified leads to bring them in as a qualified lead with a cold call, but I am interested in doing that. I want to get to a point where the new sales team that we’re ramping up, a lot of young professionals and Millennials like myself, can more efficiently leverage that. It’s tough because not everyone has a LinkedIn profile or something they can tout as being an industry

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Sales Manager, Property Management Software Developer

thought leader.”

- “If there was something that was obvious and readily available to me today that made it super-efficient within Salesforce to query against key words for user profiles, people in the industry, etc.—and then maybe have that map against an existing database to aggregate potential or future leads, good candidates—that would be meaningful to me and something I would absolutely leverage.”
- “There’s an integration opportunity into Salesforce.com, to bring in account information by doing a query against LinkedIn, so you have that image display for the [potential leads] within Salesforce. I haven’t had the opportunity to explore being able to directly communicate with LinkedIn within a Salesforce platform. I know they have it. They’ve touted it before, this interaction together.”
- “In sales, it’s about establishing an emotional connection, and a lot of times to establish an emotional connection there needs to be some validation of the sales professional from an authoritative standpoint. Whether you’re consulting or otherwise, you need to be able to demonstrate a certain level of business proficiency in whatever industry you’re in. A lot of times, that can be done through a LinkedIn profile, which has your background and recommendations.”
- “[As a sales professional], you have that 30-second window for your ‘elevator pitch.’ People who aren’t expecting that call probably would not be that receptive to it, whether I got their name from LinkedIn, Craigslist or the Yellow Pages.”
- “The best way to do it is to get very surgical with your content—one sentence or two sentences with a quick explanation of the value proposition and then ask them to connect on LinkedIn, use the InMail feature that guarantees they receive it. That could be a catalyst for kicking off a conversation. But a call right off the bat, just because you connected on LinkedIn, is not something that eliminates the barrier for them to want to have a conversation.”
- “In B2B, who do you connect with? You don’t want to just connect with anybody. Who’s the decision maker on the other end that you want to connect with? If a salesperson is doing discovery or qualifying leads, it’s difficult—you don’t want to have just random data within Salesforce. You want to do it through LinkedIn as the vetting process, and once you’ve been able to identify who that person is, then you can establish the connection. That requires a lot of additional work if you’re doing all the prospecting.”

If they’re going to really scale [Sales Navigator], they need to come up with a way that allows this tool—which they want to sell to sales professionals to allow them to seek and qualify opportunities—to seamlessly integrate with existing CRM technology. That’s the only way it’s really going to happen.

*Sales Manager, Property Management
Software Developer*

Sales Navigator

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- “What I won’t do is log into something else separately. I want to have everything consolidated through Salesforce, to have the true integrity of the data right there. If they have something, which I know they can do, that is a bi-directional communication [between LinkedIn and Salesforce], that’s how it would be used at scale and effectively. Having to log out and do these [search functions] ad hoc on your own account is not something I’d be interested in.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “I could foresee that happening [LinkedIn users being turned off by too many solicitations]. They need to have privacy configurations within the settings of each profile that would allow that not to happen.”

4. Head of national accounts for a restaurant supplier

This source does not have a premium LinkedIn account and considers Sales Navigator to be unnecessary. LinkedIn is more useful for connecting recruiters and job seekers than for helping salespeople to find leads. He maintains a LinkedIn profile, joins some groups and uses the site for background research, but does not use it to mine leads.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I have the basic LinkedIn account. Every now and then LinkedIn sends me an email that will suggest an upgrade, but everything I use it for I have been able to do or find with the regular account.”

- “I have not looked hard enough to see what the paid services offer or how they compare to what’s out there.”
- “I try to take on new accounts, but usually I find the name of the contact or lead outside of the LinkedIn website. Then I search the site to research that person, finding the proper title or regional location or finding tidbits in the profile that give me something to say.”
- “I never use it directly to find leads, but I heavily rely on the information and take notes on the contact’s background. I am not a strong user or heavy user, but I do rely on it on a regular basis.”
- “I use no other lead generators, but in our industry we generally know who the key players or companies are because that’s the nature of the QSR [quick-service restaurant] supply segment. I do follow up with it after getting business cards at a meeting and convention. I do [connect on LinkedIn] afterward.”
- “The insurance industry pops up as users. Headhunters and recruiters are definitely using the site. Every time I change something on my profile, it triggers something and I get calls from recruiters. In fact, if you go to an industry event and start talking about making a move, people say just change some detail on your profile and you’ll get calls.”
- “I don’t know if our salespeople use it. My guess is it’s mainly used if you hate your job and want to make a move. If I were miserable in a job, I would use it to network.”

Sales Navigator

- “I have not used Navigator, but I’ve heard about it and received several information emails from LinkedIn about it. I have not heard about anyone else using it.”
- “I am not using it because it’s not needed for our industry as a whole. And it’s one more thing you have to do during the day to perform your job. I only have so much time in the day to search for leads.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “I have no concern about people dropping use of the site [because of too many solicitations].”
- “People seem receptive to being found [on LinkedIn]. It always surprises me the number of customers who want to [connect on LinkedIn].”
- “I always enjoy getting a LinkedIn email from someone I used to work with 15 years ago. It’s fantastic to be back in touch with former colleagues or see what people are doing now.”
- “I have never had a request [to connect] turned down, and I never reject people outright. I look at the profile.”
- “I do think LinkedIn would benefit if they made it easier to fill in information. It should be much more user-friendly.”
- “I do get emails to join different groups, and I seem to get a lot of emails from so-and-so wanting to endorse me. Some people want to endorse me, and I have never met them and don’t know them. I’m not sure what they [LinkedIn] are trying to do with [endorsements](#), but I don’t want to be endorsed.”

5. President for a firm that manages employee benefit programs and sells individual health insurance plans

This source has a premium account and said LinkedIn is a key part of his efforts to contact potential business clients. People tend to be more receptive to being contacted through LinkedIn than with a cold call. He considers LinkedIn much more helpful in the B2B part of his firm’s operations than in consumer-oriented sales. LinkedIn does a good job of policing any potential abuse, which he appreciates.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I have a premium account. I pay \$53 per month.”
- “I use it for networking, client research and reputation building.”
- “We have created mailing lists, found new leads and learned about our prospects using LinkedIn. It is our primary resource of information and maintaining relationships.”
- “I make lists from my contacts for specific campaigns for certain industries. When I want to create a new list, I search LinkedIn for titles, company size, geography, etc. Then I save them, research each one and then contact and email and/or call. Once I make contact, we connect on LinkedIn.”
- “There are easier ways to do it—like paying thousands and buying more complete lists. But since we don’t do marketing campaigns or mailers, that would be a waste. We like to do small, targeted marketing to at least lukewarm leads. We usually only target about 25 to 50 companies at a time.”

We have created mailing lists, found new leads and learned about our prospects using LinkedIn. It is our primary resource of information and maintaining relationships.

President, Employee Benefits Management Firm

- “We don’t pay for [any other resources] for lead generation. We do have a CRM tool and use [Vocus Inc.’s/VOCS] [iContact](#), but only for contact and account maintenance. Most of our leads come from referral, networking and speaking engagements, and LinkedIn.”
- “Anything sold to consumers is probably not the best fit [for LinkedIn]. I think LinkedIn is really a B2B tool. However, the consumer does use LinkedIn to research us and check out credentials, reputation, etc.”

Sales Navigator

- “I don’t even know what [Sales Navigator] is, but now am interested.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “People are definitely more responsive to making an intro on LinkedIn, and it is always a good warm up prior to a phone call.”

6. Sales account manager for a business software company

This source wants to upgrade to Sales Navigator from a free LinkedIn account, but considers the \$600 annual cost to be too high right now. The free LinkedIn account enables him to find contacts and build relationships, but he wants a premium account so he can search more efficiently. He believes prospective clients are more open to a contact via LinkedIn than a phone call or email. LinkedIn once restricted his use of the site because of the number of people he had contacted.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I am new to the industry, never sold software before. I’m reaching out through LinkedIn to contacts I haven’t made before.”
- “I’m interested in learning more about how my type of product is employed, how it’s used. And I approach people that way, asking them a few questions. I try to find out what types of software my contacts are already using. LinkedIn makes it easier for me to find the right people I need to talk to.”
- “I also use it as a social media outlet to push out information about our software products.”
- “I’ll also ask if contacts would be interested in seeing a demonstration of my product.”
- “The end result of using LinkedIn is usually a phone call with one of three outcomes: I establish a connection with future possibilities; I get to talk to someone who’s looking for a job and they can give me some intel on their previous engagement; or I might make contacts who are interested in seeing what we’ve got and keeping us in mind for future reference.”
- “It’s effective, but if you do send LinkedIn requests, you have to be very tactical about it. If you send too many and they don’t know you, then you’re not going to get results because you might get reprimanded by LinkedIn for sending spam. However, if you sign up for the professional version, you can contact people even if you don’t know them. LinkedIn just wants to be able to charge you for it.”
- “I’m the one salesperson here. I did a lot of marketing research—the competitors, strategic market weaknesses. We are not yet in the position to buy listings. We still have enough prospects from other training development seminars.”
- “I was in the healthcare industry before this, working on a startup. LinkedIn worked pretty well when I was trying to reach the workers’ comp insurance segment, but it was a terrible way to reach doctors and their office managers. In the hospitality market, it’s really good for that. Hotel meeting planners rely a lot on word of mouth.”
- “Any industry that’s going through a lot of consolidation is probably going to be useful to connect through LinkedIn because there will be a lot of people in transition. You can find a lot of people relevant to your search very quickly.”

Sales Navigator

- “I’m not using Sales Navigator, but only because I can’t afford it right now. That’s certainly a tool I want to get. At the current price I was quoted, it’s \$50 [per month] and I think it’s worth it. Just from a quick glance, I know it would be valuable and helpful.”
- “I’ve been having a lot of success using the free version.”

It’s definitely more effective than cold calling. It’s a little bit warmer. People don’t answer the phone anymore. If I can get an email address, they might respond, but on LinkedIn, if you approach them correctly and are honest and upfront about what you’re looking for, they’re open to responding.

*Sales Account Manager
Business Software Company*

- “I get a lot of automated messages from LinkedIn about signing up.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “It’s definitely more effective than cold calling. It’s a little bit warmer. People don’t answer the phone anymore. If I can get an email address, they might respond, but on LinkedIn, if you approach them correctly and are honest and upfront about what you’re looking for, they’re open to responding.”
- “I think more people have LinkedIn connected to their personal accounts, not their work accounts, but they’re checking LinkedIn at work, just using their personal device. I’ve found I get a faster response through LinkedIn than any other contact method.”
- “Yeah, I’ve gotten some negative feedback alright. One woman basically chewed me out for contacting her. And I said, ‘I’m sorry.’ And she chewed me out again in an email. And I apologized again. And she chewed me out again. It was just that one time, but wow.”
- “I don’t think people will stop using LinkedIn if they get a few salespeople calling on them. I think you can set your account to filter out what you’re willing to receive, so it’s not an issue.”
- “I’ve never heard of LinkedIn doing anything to curb sales efforts. Nothing like that. I was on probation for a while due to the number of people I was trying to connect with, but that was lifted.”

7. President of a developer of software for managing marketing efforts

Premium LinkedIn accounts are a must for B2B salespeople to generate leads and to find the right contacts. The source’s company did not have good results with an earlier version of LinkedIn’s sales tools but is about to start a one-month trial of Sales Navigator. Recipients respond to sales pitches via LinkedIn at about the same rate as regular email. People tend to view the site as a place to host their resume rather than to interact with others, though [group discussions](#) are an exception.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “We’re just ramping up again with LinkedIn. We used the precursor to Navigator a couple of times, with less than stellar results.”
- “LinkedIn accounts are absolutely necessary if you are selling to businesses. Upgrading to paid access to get full contact information is mandatory.”
- “LinkedIn is a prospecting tool. Use it to generate leads if your customers are small to mid-sized businesses, and to ensure you are talking to the right people for enterprise sales.”
- “Size of the business seems much more important than industry vertical.”
- “No one seems to have had much success with LinkedIn’s [marketing] tools, such as paid advertisements. People who have done stuff like the free ad trials report zero responses.”
- “In one way, this is not surprising. LinkedIn is very much more about having an updated profile and not so much about interacting with the site.”
- “The one exception to [people not interacting with the site] seems to be Groups. There are lively group discussions.”

Sales Navigator

- “We’re just about to start a Navigator trial. I should have more to say about that later in the month.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “People seem to treat LinkedIn mail like any other email.”
- “Hardly anyone spends time on LinkedIn the way they spend time on [Facebook Inc./FB], so they’re not seeing the sales contacts there. They’re seeing the notifications that come in via email. As such, they get treated the same as any other email.”
- “Many business people prefer sales contacts via email—I certainly do—because they are less intrusive than, say, phone calls. You can deal with a sales email or not, at your leisure. The LinkedIn notification emails just get lumped in with the rest.”

Hardly anyone spends time on LinkedIn the way they spend time on [Facebook Inc./FB], so they’re not seeing the sales contacts there. They’re seeing the notifications that come in via email. As such, they get treated the same as any other email.

*President
Marketing Software Developer*

8. Regional sales VP for a provider of videoconferencing systems

This source has a premium LinkedIn account that he uses for occasional blind introductions to prospective clients, but he was not familiar with Sales Navigator and does not use the site's search filters for building lists of potential leads. He considers LinkedIn just one piece of his marketing strategy and somewhat down on his priority list. He has received more cold solicitations himself lately, often from job seekers, and thinks LinkedIn needs to clamp down on those types of contacts. Still, he was not concerned about salespeople abusing LinkedIn and turning off other users.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- "I do have a paid account. I have the Business plan, not Plus or Executive."
- "As a sales individual, I use LinkedIn primarily for introductions. That's one of the reasons I went with the [premium] level plan. I wanted to see who is looking at my profile, and I wanted to see full profiles."
- "It's one part of everything I do. Even with the free version, I was joining a lot of groups and paying attention to different message threads and using it from that perspective. You don't want to be frowned upon and overdo it, but you do want to stay involved in the community and see what's going on."
- "[A premium account] is worth the cost. It's inexpensive and worth it just for getting InMail introductions, sending direct messages. I only do a couple a month. I think my account allows for three a month, but that's more than enough for what I use it for."
- "I haven't yet [used LinkedIn for finding prospective customers]. It's just a piece of the marketing strategy. But with a lot of irons in the fire, I don't have that much time to dive into it, so I wouldn't say I'm a LinkedIn expert. There may be some information there that I'm leaving on the table. I use it a little bit but may use it more in the future."
- "[LinkedIn users whom I contact] might be people I came across outside of LinkedIn. I may have found out about some company that's doing a contract, and I'll go find out someone's name and send an InMail and make a blind introduction."
- "I think it makes a difference [contacting someone via LinkedIn rather than a cold call or email]. I've got a decent size network, so I think it's worth it."
- "As a company, we do some level of advertising on LinkedIn. We have an account for our company that's totally separate from my personal account."
- "We contract out to a third-party in Massachusetts that does outbound calling for us."

Sales Navigator

- "I might have heard of it in passing, but I don't know anything about it."

Potential Pitfalls

- "I get more [solicitations] now than in the past [on LinkedIn]. Quite honestly, I don't even respond."
- "In the last three months or so I've been getting more messages along the lines of, 'Hey, I noticed that we may have some common business interests. I'm a programmer and see that you may have need for a programmer.' That's what I'd consider a cold solicitation rather than 'I ran into Johnny at the trade show and he says you and I should talk.'"
- "That's something I think they will need to do sooner rather than later, monitor that [type of cold contact]."

9. Founder of a social media consulting firm

This executive uses a premium LinkedIn account to network with prospective customers and employees. She views the site as a useful starting point for building a relationship that might lead to a sale. LinkedIn probably has more value for B2B sales than B2C because of its database strengths in filtering and searching for specific types of professionals. As a sales team management tool, Salesforce.com is a better option.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- "I use LinkedIn as both a sales tool and for recruitment. It is my primary tool for recruiting locally and nationally. I also use it for sales as a way to identify who I need to talk to in an organization and as a vehicle to start a dialogue."
- "I use the premium service and am currently interested in the more dynamic dashboard for who's viewed your profile."
- "LinkedIn is probably better for B2B professionals. You have the ability to search for people in specific professions or with specific backgrounds. You can drill down to find the right person in a company that you're looking for."

- “I think that B2C salespeople would find using LinkedIn more of a challenge than maybe some other channels, like Facebook, where you can connect with an audience that has broader interests.”

Sales Navigator

- “I’ve looked at Sales Navigator. They sent me an offer to try it out—I think it was a free month trial—but I haven’t signed up for that. I don’t know that I really need it.”
- “Is it an essential tool? Maybe, if it helps you find the people you need to reach faster. It might expedite a sale by helping you get to the right person in a B2B transaction.”
- “I think there are better solutions out there for managing a sales team. Salesforce.com is probably the best.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “I’ve found people to be quite receptive to engaging through LinkedIn.”
- “The offers to connect or hear about a product haven’t gotten to the point where I’d abandon the site. I’m not sure what it would take to reach that point, but I don’t think we’re there yet. I don’t know of any alternative to LinkedIn that’s as valuable a resource.”
- “I’ve never gotten negative feedback on LinkedIn.”

“Is it an essential tool? Maybe, if it helps you find the people you need to reach faster. It might expedite a sale by helping you get to the right person in a B2B transaction.”

Founder, Social Media Consulting Firm

10. Senior account manager for a textile supplier to clothing manufacturers

This source uses LinkedIn’s free services but has no interest in a premium account or Sales Navigator. LinkedIn is useful for getting background information on potential clients, but his industry is highly specialized and already well served by trade associations and other services. He has started to receive more unsolicited messages via LinkedIn from people outside of his industry, which he views as annoying and a potential pitfall for the site.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “All of us in management are on [LinkedIn], 50 people in all. We use it to find contacts or get information on a brand or a potential client. I find names that I know. I even find people I used to know or work with and see what they are doing.”
- “If you are using it to find names and titles of people to contact, it is very useful. I probably use it four to five times a week to get background on a potential client or information about a new customer.”
- “We don’t bother looking at the recommendations [on a user’s LinkedIn profile]. ... I only check education and experience and areas of interest.”
- “We use the free service. I don’t use the premium account because it’s not necessary. It wouldn’t help me reach more people than I do now through industry services or trade association directories and data.”
- “We use it like Facebook for business. I suppose at some point LinkedIn may have to charge fees if they want to grow. But we wouldn’t use it unless it was free. Our industry is too specific to make it worth the extra cost.”
- “I join groups [on LinkedIn] ... but I don’t follow conversations or participate. It’s a tool to see what issues are being talked about or what trade shows are coming up.”

“I don’t use the premium account because it’s not necessary. It wouldn’t help me reach more people than I do now through industry services or trade association directories and data.”

*Senior Account Manager
Clothing Textile Supplier*

Sales Navigator

- “I don’t use Sales Navigator. It could be that LinkedIn has contacted our marketing people [about it], but if true, it hasn’t trickled down. I have not seen any promotions about it from LinkedIn.”
- “We use other [outside] tools and services for a fee. We use a service that gives us the names of potential contacts in Europe. They also monitor what fashions are featured in store windows. But this is a very specific service that caters to textiles, fashion and design.”
- “It does not have a high monthly fee. I believe we get four reports a year for a total of \$1,000. It’s useful; we don’t have to pay \$5,000 a trip for one of our people to fly over and get the information. Not all of the information they provide is worth it. We use about 40% of the stuff they send us.”

- “We also are part of the [textile industry \[trade association\]](#), and they provide a lot of industry information that comes from research or association reports. We also network at conferences like [Textile World](#), but again this is all part of specialization for our trade.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “We do get random emails [through LinkedIn]. It’s annoying because it rarely serves our purposes. Unless you are in a business that is directly related to our industry, we have no use for outside contacts.”
- “Recently I’ve received more messages to connect with people, but they are in finance or are mortgage brokers. This did not happen before. ... It dilutes the purpose, and at some point it may no longer be helpful.”
- “I’m guessing they contact me because they see I am B2B, they see my executive title and the ZIP code I live in, where there is a lot of activity now. It’s annoying. I’m using this as an industry tool, not to talk to someone about personal finance or selling a house.”
- “I suppose there could be the fear that the site will become too generic and we’ll start getting too many inquiries or too much spam. But right now it is useful.”
- “I have no concerns about people dropping out. The contact settings are easy to control, or you just don’t respond.”
- “I haven’t seen LinkedIn doing anything to control abuse.”

11. Sales manager for LCD technologies

This salesman does not have a premium LinkedIn account and does not have much interest in Sales Navigator. He uses LinkedIn occasionally to search for contact names, but the market for his company’s technology is limited and specific. He prefers calling a company directly once he has identified it as a potential client.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I have not used LinkedIn for any sort of major data mining.”
- “What I have done with LinkedIn is to search for the names of key contacts—or if I have a name, to see if they are still at the company and what their current position is.”
- “I realize that I’m probably sounding like a sales curmudgeon at this point, but it’s primarily because of my knowledge of the specific LCD market I’m chasing—primarily OEM commercial and industrial—over the past 25 years, and where my current product offering fits in.”
- “Our customer base is in areas where a standard product doesn’t quite fit. There is good and bad to that: the good being that we are one of the few offering the services we do and probably the best—and if you need it, you really do need it. The bad is that 80%-plus of the market does not need what we offer.”
- “What I have done is to use [ThomasNet](#) to target specific SIC [standard industrial classification] codes for markets that I’m focusing on.”
- “If I want to make a trip to Texas, then I’ll pull up specific OEM SIC codes that I think would be the best fit for what we do in Texas, then just call those companies directly. I’ve found that to be most effective in this position.”

Sales Navigator

- “I don’t [have a premium account], and I haven’t [looked into Sales Navigator].”

Potential Pitfalls

- N/A

12. Owner of a mechanical engineering and manufacturing company

This source uses a free LinkedIn account, primarily as an educational forum for his company’s technology. After building his network and evaluating premium LinkedIn options, he has decided not to upgrade because he believes Sales Navigator does not add value relative to cost. The actual sales process is often long and involved, and LinkedIn is just the first step in establishing contact with potential buyers. Salesforce.com offers more powerful tools for managing sales leads through the pipeline.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I use the free version. My goal every night is to empty my mailbox before I go to bed. If I had a pro version, I think I’d get a lot less sleep.”

- “LinkedIn is just absolutely great for finding people and building relationships. I’ve made connections that enabled me to bid on projects in the Philippines, Brazil, Australia, and throughout the United States, but it’s not as great as I thought it would be. We’ve made some bids, sure, but I’m now seeing LinkedIn more as a way of making introductions and telling our story.”
- “What I do most is I get on LinkedIn to educate people about what we do. And through that education, people come back to me and want to learn more. From there, I send them over to my other email account and we start doing serious connections. LinkedIn is a place for me to educate industry, government and the world.”
- “I try to choose and pick the people I’m connecting with, but out of the 3,000 people I have as contacts, I’ve been able to do maybe 30 price quotations through LinkedIn. I look at it as my school house, not as much as a direct sales tool. We’re offering a technology that people are not overly familiar with, and LinkedIn is a place to explain what we do.”
- “We use Salesforce.com for a lot of our customers as we move them through the process. Honestly, it’s better than what LinkedIn has to offer in terms of managing our pipeline. LinkedIn is better for building relationships.”
- “I don’t go on LinkedIn to buy anything myself either, so I can’t say if B2C salespeople would find it a useful tool.”

Sales Navigator

- “I’ve gotten an offer for Sales Navigator. It was like a 30-day trial, but it really doesn’t seem worth it for the price they’re asking. We might try to find potential customers on LinkedIn, but I would contact them directly.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “Absolutely, people are receptive [to contact via LinkedIn]. With some people, it almost feels like a friendship when you connect and get to know them a bit.”
- “I’ve never gotten any bad feedback, but sometimes I’ve wanted to give some. There are some people who get on some of the discussion groups and I don’t like their vocabulary, their method of communication. But if I come across them, I do my best not to go back there anymore. I’m not a person of conflict.”
- “There are people who’ve got stuff to sell who think it would fit well alongside our stuff. I basically tell them I’ll put it in our file and if the need comes up, I’ll get back to them. I don’t mind the contact. They’re trying to sell a solution and I appreciate that.”
- “If somebody tries to sell something way out of line, I’ll just tell them I have no interest in this.”
- “I always look at somebody’s profile before I connect with them. If we have nothing in common, I don’t connect with them. It’s easy; you just don’t reply.”
- “I haven’t seen anything that would indicate LinkedIn is controlling how people interact on the site. Maybe the number of emails you can send to people unless you upgrade your service, but nothing like stopping people from trying to sell.”

We use Salesforce.com for a lot of our customers as we move them through the process. Honestly, it’s better than what LinkedIn has to offer in terms of managing our pipeline. LinkedIn is better for building relationships.

Owner, Mechanical Engineering & Manufacturing Company

13. Executive with a media/marketing company for paper/package/consumer product suppliers

This source and his sales staff are heavy users of the free LinkedIn service, tapping it to generate leads, get background information, keep abreast of personnel changes and contact potential speakers for conferences produced by his company. He sees no need for a premium account, even though LinkedIn has offered a free one-month trial. He had not heard of Sales Navigator. He doubts LinkedIn can compete in the already crowded field of customer management services or with companies like Salesforce.com, the lead tool used by his company.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “Absolutely, our salespeople use it. They use it every day to generate target lists of people in the industry, and then they add them as a connection or reach out to them. But I don’t believe they are using premium accounts, and I don’t believe corporate is looking at subscribing to the premium service. We don’t need it. You can work around it.”
- “I have the standard account. I don’t use the premium because I don’t need it at this point.”

- “You have to look at the ROI. LinkedIn allows you to communicate with the right people in the right industry, but I can find them with the regular account. It’s true there are some people I cannot get access to because there are roadblocks. But I think there is actually more leeway when you use the unpaid version.”
- “I use it to connect with people quickly and to identify speakers. We produce conferences and webinars, and I have filled entire speaker panels using LinkedIn.”
- “I use it based on a trigger: I will see a news article or see quotes in a report, and then I find that person on LinkedIn and contact them, usually sending a short note.”
- “The recommendations are helpful for building the credibility of a contact. It establishes a trust level of the person’s viability as a reliable contact.”
- “The groups are very helpful, and we also have our own company group.”
- “I view it as a tool that just helps you get to a target audience quickly. It’s also good for keeping up on new jobs or executive moves and it helps keep an accurate Rolodex.”
- “I don’t think we use any other fee-based tools beyond Salesforce.com. We have a company subscription [to Salesforce.com] that allows for a certain number of seats [users].”
- “I see Salesforce and LinkedIn as two different tools. Salesforce helps you create a pipeline and a community to look at so you can improve sales. It is more of an internal tool. LinkedIn is trying to create similar tools but I don’t think they can do it. There are already an awful lot of people in the CRM solutions segment, and a lot of people are trying to get a piece of that pie. I don’t think LinkedIn has what it takes to compete.”

LinkedIn allows you to communicate with the right people in the right industry, but I can find them with the regular account. It’s true there are some people I cannot get access to because there are roadblocks. But I think there is actually more leeway when you use the unpaid version.

Executive, Media/Marketing Company

Sales Navigator

- “I have never heard of Sales Navigator. I have never been contacted by anyone about Sales Navigator.”
- “I do receive emails asking me to try the premium service with a free, one-month trial. They are trying to upgrade people from the basic account to premium, saying you can reach more people and get better access. I think they are trying to upsell even more than before.”
- “As an individual corporate user, I would not pay for an upgrade. If our company paid for it—and they don’t—obviously I would use it.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “People are receptive to being found on LinkedIn. If you are on LinkedIn, it almost suggests you want to be contacted. More and more people are on it. Some people are very vocal and have a very high number of hits, which to me shows they want to be contacted.”
- “I do get some spam, but I just don’t view it. To be receptive, I have to be contacted by someone who is relevant to our industry. If they are relevant, I have no need to block them or reject the contact.”
- “That people might watch my profile or look at my status anonymously doesn’t bother me.”

14. VP of marketing for a global online media company

This source uses a free LinkedIn account and has no plans to upgrade to premium. Her company’s sales staff does use LinkedIn to find potential corporate customers, but she uses LinkedIn mainly to network with industry contacts and keep a visible presence in relevant industry groups. To generate leads, the company uses Salesforce.com, paying for six enterprise licenses used by sales associates. The source had not heard of Sales Navigator.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I have the free level, and I use it for work to build relationships.”
- “Because I have no desire at this point to advance my career or change jobs, I keep my profile current but only use it for networking. I ... have no plan to upgrade [to a paid subscription].”
- “I do not have a premium account and do not need one. Some of our salespeople may have a higher level but, if so, they are pursuing it on their own.”
- “As someone in a senior position, I have used it to post recommendations for our staff people and to highlight their skills.”

- “We are not in B2C sales, per se, but are a B2B business, and our salespeople and marketing people mine LinkedIn to find potential subscribers or speakers for the conferences we produce.”
- “LinkedIn is widely used for recruiting and finding jobs. My last assistant was recruited and hired away by someone via LinkedIn.”
- “We have a LinkedIn page for our company. I am in certain groups and post things, but not often.”
- “We use another tool for generating leads: Salesforce.com. We pay them for a corporate account, and that is our primary CRM tool. We have five to six enterprise licenses for our staff.”
- “I don’t know the exact cost [of Salesforce.com]. I just know it’s not cheap. We consider them the big, serious player and have no need for other services or upgrades on LinkedIn.”

Sales Navigator

- “I have not heard of Sales Navigator or any LinkedIn tool for finding leads or contacts. I don’t believe I have received emails from LinkedIn about it. If I have, I did not read them.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “I think people are OK being contacted [via LinkedIn] as long as the contact comes from a relevant business person in our field either sending information or requesting contact.”
- “I have received emails and inquiries from people selling services to repair windows or doors, and that does get annoying. You can ignore it, and I do.”

15. President of a sales agency specializing in luggage and travel gear

This salesman with nearly 25 years’ experience does not see the need for a premium LinkedIn account. He uses the site to keep in touch with professional friends and customers and sometimes to get details about a specific buyer, but he does not use it to find sales leads. He was not concerned that salespeople have abused the site in soliciting customers.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “LinkedIn is not likely to be helpful] in my line of work. I will use LinkedIn to find out information about a buyer but do not use it for sales leads. I cannot say that all people in my industry use it that way. However, a lot do use it for information only.”
- “I use it mainly as a contact vehicle with professional friends and business accounts.”
- “I do not use it for sales leads.”

Sales Navigator

- N/A

Potential Pitfalls

- “There’s no problem [using LinkedIn] for business contacts.”

2) B2C Sales Professionals

Only two of these nine sources pay for a premium LinkedIn account, and none considered it imperative to their B2C sales. Also, sources do not use the site directly for finding new clients; instead, they rely on it for building their own credibility, screening vendors and sharing industry news. Two sources are considering a Sales Navigator subscription, including one who already has a premium account and another who sees the solution as potentially useful for an upcoming fundraiser. Sources reported minimal concern about excessive sales pitches turning off LinkedIn users.

KEY SILO FINDINGS

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- 2 have premium subscriptions, but neither described it as vital.
- None uses it for finding leads on new clients or customers.
- 1 uses LinkedIn to build credibility, and 1 to screen vendors.

Sales Navigator

- 5 have heard of Sales Navigator.

LinkedIn Corp.

- None currently pays for it.
- 3 are considering upgrading to Sales Navigator or see potential value in it.

Potential Pitfalls

- 1 said too many sales pitches could turn into a nuisance.
- 1 is concerned that requests to connect are aimed at identifying and stealing company accounts.
- 1 financial advisor said recommendations of him by users on LinkedIn could violate SEC regulations.

1. Principal in a financial planning firm

A large swath of this source's target market—young and middle-aged white-collar professionals—spend time on LinkedIn, so he considers it important to have a presence and be active on the site by participating in discussions and posting links. However, he does not have a premium account and does not use LinkedIn to find leads or close deals. Rather, he uses the site as another social media tool to help customers find him and to drive them to his website.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- "I'm using the free version. I want to wrap my head around this program before I start a monthly subscription."
- "I wouldn't consider myself an expert on LinkedIn. I'm just realizing the true potential."
- "More and more people are vetting advisors through the Internet, so it is important to showcase yourself and your credentials, especially on LinkedIn."
- "My target market is young professionals between the ages of 30 to 55, and there are many of this age group using LinkedIn."
- "I am using LinkedIn groups to start discussions. I mention myself when I'm quoted in articles. I will post videos when those are finished, and I post related articles on it, including from my blog."
- "LinkedIn has not directly led to a closed deal, but that's not necessarily what it is for. I see all social media to drive traffic to your site, at which point the consumer can make an educated decision to move forward with you. Social media has also helped get my search rankings higher."
- "The better way to approach sales in financial planning is allowing the consumer to come to you. I don't link up with people I don't know, and I don't drag people into my office. I want to sit down with people who want to be there, and those are the people that make the effort to reach out to me. This is essentially inbound marketing."
- "A perfect way to touch people that you don't know is to start a discussion in a group. I'm about to send out a link in one of the young professional groups I am in. When people click on it, it will direct them to my LinkedIn page."
- "LinkedIn is best used for people targeting white-collar professionals. Some advisors might not find it useful because their target market is contractors or small business owners. Some of them don't find the site useful or have the time to spend on it."

LinkedIn has not directly led to a closed deal, but that's not necessarily what it is for. I see all social media to drive traffic to your site, at which point the consumer can make an educated decision to move forward with you.

Principal, Financial Planning Firm

Sales Navigator

- N/A

Potential Pitfalls

- "The only issue I see with financial advisors [using LinkedIn] is having people recommend you. This is considered a testimonial, which is prohibited [by Securities and Exchange Commission rules]. You can turn off the recommendations, or at least hide them so no one can see them."

2. CEO of a technology company specializing in music instruction hardware and software

This premium LinkedIn account holder is considering upgrading to a Sales Navigator subscription, and would be willing to pay up to \$100 per month for the service. His hesitation to do so results from already having more than 8,000 connections. He uses LinkedIn mainly to educate people about his products and has found it useful as a word-of-mouth promotional tool.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I have a premium account.”
- “We have 8,000 people who’ve connected with us. LinkedIn has been a surprising platform for us. I expected to utilize it for finding people to outsource things for building our technology. Then I started building my profile on there, and people have really discovered us.”
- “I use LinkedIn to educate people, explain what we’re doing and encourage them to tell their friends about it. Now I’ve got people coming to us about the product rather than me going to them. LinkedIn is good for spreading the word. We’ve had people tell other people about us, so our connections are growing without a lot of effort on our part.”
- “We’ve been getting 30, 40, 50 people a day adding us on LinkedIn.”
- “It’s better than Facebook and [Specific Media LLC’s] [MySpace](#) in terms of the people we want to reach. As far as trying to hawk a product, LinkedIn is a good place for a new gadget or a new technology.”
- “We do some advertising and maintain a page on Facebook. We no longer use [Twitter \[Inc./TWTR\]](#). It’s a waste of time.”
- “LinkedIn’s premium tools can probably benefit B2B and B2C. I think it’s a mix. A lot of people who are coming to me are professionals, but they’re also looking at us for themselves, as potential customers who want to buy our products. We also hear from a lot of people who want to sell components to us.”
- “I may have gotten an email from LinkedIn about some of their premium services. I might be ready now to research it a little more and then we’ll see.”

Sales Navigator

- “I’m going to look into Sales Navigator. We have the money; I just need to research it. We have a lot of other initiatives underway.”
- “I really would have to research Sales Navigator before I’d buy it. If I feel like it will enable us to reach more people, I’ll use it. I’d be willing to pay up to \$100 a month if it’s beneficial. If it’s just decision makers, they typically come to us, and I wouldn’t need to pay more for that since we’re already connecting with those people.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “Most [sales contacts via LinkedIn are] local trades people who want me to do something for them. Some people want me to rate them, but I don’t give out endorsements unless I know them.”
- “Typically, we need to keep our firewall in place, not just on our computers but in our thinking and strategies. I’ve had several people try to knock off my technology, but our intellectual property is pretty well protected. I’ve been told by my lawyer not to show anything about finished designs.”
- “People do abuse the system, when they send me their cards to rate them, but I just send it to the archives.”
- “If somebody’s giving me endorsements, I feel like I should reciprocate, but I don’t know if that’s the best motivation.”
- “Early on I would get invitations sent to me, and I was encouraged by LinkedIn asking if I knew a list of people. So I sent them all invitations to connect. Then LinkedIn warned me not to do that unless I actually knew all the people we were sending invitations to. But when we got a paid subscription, we could send an invitation to anybody. It seems a little hypocritical for them to do that—it’s OK if you’re paying LinkedIn for a membership ,but it’s not OK if you use their free service.”

When we got a paid subscription, we could send an invitation to anybody. It seems a little hypocritical for them to do that—it’s OK if you’re paying LinkedIn for a membership ,but it’s not OK if you use their free service.

CEO, Technology Company

3. Property and casualty insurance agent

This source does not pay for a LinkedIn subscription and does not use the site for lead generation. However, he does see the potential for LinkedIn to be an effective tool for salespeople, especially those selling professional services. Users should report excessive solicitations, but that currently is not a big problem.

Linked as Sales Tool

- “I have a free account.”
- “I use LinkedIn to share blog posts, ideas, and make new connections every day.”

- “I mainly use it as a way to continue a conversation or connect with new people. I have not used it as a lead source yet, but I know it could be effective.”
- “I use many platforms in digital marketing and simply haven’t leveraged LinkedIn as well as some other platforms. That being said, I know it can be effective.”
- “I have thought about upgrading, but until I utilize the free options, it hasn’t made sense to pull the trigger.”
- “I don’t pay for any other lead-generation tools. [I develop leads through] my blog, speaking and social media.”
- “LinkedIn is a unique platform because it focuses on business. It has less fluff, and that’s good for people wanting to connect and share business ideas. Any industry could benefit, but those in the professional services can really stand out.”

Sales Navigator

- N/A

Potential Pitfalls

- “I have had very little pushback with new LinkedIn intros. There is some spam, so you need to be careful. If you connect with a personalized message, people are much, much more receptive than using the standard ‘I want to connect’ [invitation].”
- “I haven’t had a huge problem with [too many solicitations], but it is important to report and eliminate spam as it can undermine the usefulness and effectiveness of the site.”

4. EVP of brand management for a bedding manufacturer

This executive has a free LinkedIn account and had not heard of Sales Navigator. The site is not well suited to promoting or building his business, which he said requires broad marketing efforts. He uses LinkedIn mainly for “resume hosting.” Beyond that, he does not know how to make the site relevant or useful for his business. He does not believe many professionals are interested in receiving sales solicitations through LinkedIn.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I have a free account. I use it for resume hosting.”
- “I’m not sure what it’s good at other than linking people with like interests or friends. I rarely use it as a communication tool.”
- “We use our website to do the heavy lifting. In a low-interest category like [mattress retail], broad reach mediums are still the ticket to drive traffic volume.”
- “LinkedIn is best suited for professional services, probably. But then again, I get so tired of getting called on by people that I have no idea are qualified to manage my business. I don’t have time to vet all the requests.”

Sales Navigator

- “I have no idea what Sales Navigator is.”
- “I’ve heard no sales pitch about it.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “I do have a concern about LinkedIn: I don’t know how to make it relevant for my business.”
- “I don’t think people are receptive to cold calls on LinkedIn.”
- “I only contact those that know me or we have mutual friends. The business benefit I bring is painfully obvious.”
- “I get the occasional cold call or ‘friend of a friend’ call.”
- “I do think the ability to link to someone new is not done well. As a result, I always check the box of ‘colleague’ if I want to link with someone.”

I do have a concern about LinkedIn: I don’t know how to make it relevant for my business.

*EVP of Brand Management
Bedding Manufacturer*

5. VP of sales for an e-commerce pet supply firm; author, screenwriter and songwriter

This source uses his free LinkedIn account regularly but has no need for the premium service in his direct-to-consumer pet supply business. He uses the site to assess vendors and get background information on people who cold-call him. However, he does use a premium subscription for networking in the entertainment industry for his personal projects in

books, movies and music. The subscription has helped identify literary agents, special interest film groups and entertainment professionals that otherwise might have been unapproachable or out of reach.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- "I am on LinkedIn, but do not have a premium account because I don't need it."
- "We do a lot of business with cold callers and I use LinkedIn to check people out and view their credentials."
- "I don't use it to find sales contacts, but it's useful for screening vendors."
- "It's a very good tool for making contact. I'm on the receiving end of email contact all the time. It's constantly being used for networking and making inquiries."
- "I view LinkedIn as the 800-pound gorilla in the room. Right now it's all I need to look at."
- "We are not really on the sales side for B2B. We are B2C in a mass market. A premium account might be useful for a B2B business. I don't think it would work for a B2C. It's not really in keeping with the B2C structure."
- "I think it's effective for shopping your resume and professional credentials."
- "I don't use premium for sales contacts or leads for my primary job, just for my personal projects."
- "I did decide to subscribe to the premium account for my personal projects. I co-write country music songs, I've written original screenplays, and I have a thriller novel that will be published this year. I'm working on a second novel in a series that I'm trying to adapt for movies."
- "I got a premium account because I don't exactly live in Nashville or Hollywood and there isn't a large artistic community [here]."
- "It's been helpful for networking with screen production companies. It's been good for networking and helping to find literary agents."
- "I join [LinkedIn] groups for writers and film makers. I can't imagine in the entertainment industry finding another initial way to network with the artistic community, especially for someone living outside of Hollywood or New York."
- "It's also been useful for presenting my resume and professional experience. I also have a site on LinkedIn and the web for my songwriting and screening products."

I think most people are receptive to being contacted on LinkedIn]. People understand the nature of the thing and they understand its purpose. It's not Facebook, it's a business tool. Plus, you can control who makes contact with you, and you can choose not to answer.

VP of Sales
E-commerce Pet Supply Firm

Sales Navigator

- "My wife recently mentioned the business version Sales Navigator. I had not heard of it. She just mentioned the name."

Potential Pitfalls

- "I think most people are receptive to being contacted on LinkedIn]. People understand the nature of the thing and they understand its purpose. It's not Facebook, it's a business tool. Plus, you can control who makes contact with you, and you can choose not to answer."
- "I think it's a good model. I have no major complaints. I've seen no major changes."

6. Communications officer for an art museum

This source uses a free LinkedIn account but is mulling a Sales Navigator subscription in anticipation of a major fundraiser. She believes LinkedIn is more useful for B2B sales overall and for sales of services rather than products in the B2C sector. She uses LinkedIn mainly as a means of making introductions and building relationships. She does not have a problem with the volume of sales pitches in her LinkedIn account, but does not want to see the site become commercially dependent like Facebook. She would prefer paid accounts over exposure to excessive on-site advertising.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- "I'm using the free account. We got rid of our ancient Listserv and now use LinkedIn for our national communications. I'm in a lot of groups on LinkedIn, and it's a great way for common audiences to gather and communicate."

- “The museum uses LinkedIn promotionally to inform people about major milestones, special initiatives. We’re very aware that LinkedIn has increased in its importance, and we’re delighted with the refinements LinkedIn has made to their interface. It’s getting easier to use.”
- “I read so much about how much more important LinkedIn has become for salespeople, but in my experience it’s more moderate. I’m looking for a platform that’s more targeted and is not as dependent on advertising as Facebook has become.”
- “We have a variety of audiences that we endeavor to reach—certainly educated professionals, who are our primary targets.”
- “LinkedIn may be better suited to companies selling services, and even then it’s more of a way to build relationships. We’re beginning to see that it’s probably going to benefit B2B sales more than B2C.”
- “Although we’re a nonprofit, you could say that we straddle both B2B and B2C because we try to forge relationships with corporations, but we also promote the museum to individuals through annual memberships.”
- “With B2B you stand a better chance of finding the right person to talk to in an organization. There are better alternatives for reaching out to consumers than using LinkedIn. We don’t see it as an effective tool for connecting with individual consumers or even consumer groups.”
- “We’re often targeting prospective donors, affluent individuals, and LinkedIn can be a good tool for that, but we’re starting to see that it’s not the best option or even a good option for promoting museum memberships, tickets to special exhibits and things like that. Maybe we’ll post that information to a LinkedIn group.”

We’re looking at Sales Navigator, but we haven’t decided on it yet. We’re discussing a crowdfunding launch, and that might be a very good tool for getting the word out about that.

Communications Officer, Art Museum

Sales Navigator

- “It’s not cheap. I’ve seen prices from \$400 to \$500 a month.”
- “We’re looking at Sales Navigator, but we haven’t decided on it yet. We’re discussing a crowdfunding launch, and that might be a very good tool for getting the word out about that.”
- “For a fundraising campaign targeting educated professionals, it could be very useful.”
- “We use Twitter, Facebook, [Facebook’s] [Instagram](#), [Foursquare](#). We also offer free engagement through our newsletter.”
- “LinkedIn has not contacted me about premium services.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “I actually find that the majority of communications through LinkedIn are people trying to sell me something. Only through the professional groups I’m involved in do I find the intelligent conversations I need for my work.”
- “LinkedIn is evolving. Unlike Facebook, LinkedIn has always been more of a professional networking tool. After you build this network, people are using it obviously to sell or market their commodity. How much is too much? I think that depends on individual tolerance.”
- “LinkedIn is probably going to have to do a balancing act between selling premium services or posting lots of ads. I’d rather see them move toward paid accounts than have the site lose credibility with too much advertising.”

7. Owner of a technology training, education and printing/graphics consultancy targeting consumers

This source uses free LinkedIn services to build his company brand and persona, but he shuns all other outside solicitations in order to protect customers and colleagues from prospectors seeking to infiltrate his network. He is familiar with the premium and Sales Navigator services, but does not see them as vital to his business. LinkedIn is great for recruiters and for building brand awareness, but is not useful in generating leads in either B2B or B2C.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I am on LinkedIn and I’ve thought about upgrading, but I just don’t see that there would be enough of a return. The problem for me with social media is that it takes time, and it’s not that easy to turn one keystroke into one buck.”
- “This is not to say LinkedIn premium is not worth the money. The premium account does allow you to contact people you would not otherwise be able to contact. But the short answer to the overall question is, no, the premium account is not essential. There is nothing I see in it that gives any indication it would be widely helpful unless you are a recruiter.”

- “The only people I connect to on LinkedIn are my direct clients or people I have worked with or work with now.”
- “I use it to show people who I am, what I do and I offer information about my services. But LinkedIn is not part of my coordinated marketing effort, simply because I think [social media] is unseemly. It’s like a sales manager who contacts you and asks for your contacts. I am not interested in prospecting or having prospectors tap my sources and contacts for fodder. I prefer to protect my clients.”
- “LinkedIn is a great tool for the recruiting industry. It’s great for marketing because it’s an open platform for people to expound on what they do. But it has nothing to really offer me that I can’t do for myself without them.”
- “It strikes me as a redundant effort for those who know what they are doing and have contacts or a blind alley for people who are chasing leads from scratch but do not know what they are doing.”
- “I don’t think it’s a tool for closing [deals]. It may be a prospecting tool but only in that you are turning over people in your network and burning them because you are going to turn over their names to spammers. It’s not a real viable tool for finding leads.”
- “LinkedIn is a good place to build a persona. Everyone is on their best behavior and putting their best foot forward on the LinkedIn profiles.”
- “I don’t use any other services or pay for leads. I do my own email, my own mail marketing and my own telemarketing. I may use a service for big projects where I would pay to ship.”
- “LinkedIn is not a good tool for B2C. There are better tools out there for direct-to-consumer, like Instagram, [Pinterest](#), [IAC/InterActive Corp.’s/IACI] [Vimeo](#) or [Google Inc.’s/GOOG] [YouTube](#).”
- “As for B2B, if you are in the business of recruiting, it probably works well. These are probably the B2B people you used to ignore if they were not directly in your industry. So for the recipient, it’s one more avenue you have to ignore.”
- “I think it’s a great brand builder. It’s not great for bottom-line sales.”
- “I don’t think it’s as oppressive as Facebook, which is now trying to build out into the Third World because they are saturated in the First World.”

Sales Navigator

- “I have heard of Sales Navigator. I’ve heard it is a plug-in that allows you to exploit social media for X amount of dollars.”
- “I am not using Navigator because it’s not my avenue. This is not to say it isn’t viable but, for me, it would really have to have a return on investment. It’s not just about the money. There is time and attention you have to devote to offset the cost of the service. I’d rather put my money into having people search for me in other ways than by those searching on LinkedIn.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “I get a dozen solicitations from salespeople a week, asking to join my network only to try to tap the people in my network. I am contacted by printing sales professionals, advertising agencies. I receive a couple of emails a week from people in India for reasons I don’t know or care. I ignore them. I don’t reject them flat out. I just don’t respond.”
- “I think the unsolicited email contacts are problematic, especially if you are going straight out to make a sale. Lots of people do what I do; they just ignore it.”
- “And then [LinkedIn] wants you to upgrade. They want to charge me more money to get more people to contact me that I will ignore. I’d rather build my own presence on LinkedIn than have them connect to me.”
- “I don’t see folks dropping out [because of too many sales pitches]. I see folks becoming inactive.”

It strikes me as a redundant effort for those who know what they are doing and have contacts or a blind alley for people who are chasing leads from scratch but do not know what they are doing.

Owner
Tech Training, Education Consultancy

I get a dozen solicitations from salespeople a week, asking to join my network only to try to tap the people in my network. I am contacted by printing sales professionals, advertising agencies. I receive a couple of emails a week from people in India for reasons I don’t know or care. I ignore them. I don’t reject them flat out. I just don’t respond.

Owner
Tech Training, Education Consultancy

8. Sales professional for a photography company with hundreds of retail studios

This source has a free LinkedIn account but does not regularly use it to develop leads. She has no need for a premium account or Sales Navigator, and views social media tools as time-consuming and invasive. If LinkedIn could augment or integrate offerings from Salesforce.com, perhaps it would merit a second look. She does not respond to emails or requests to link in to her network, fearing contacts are searching for corporate account information.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I am on LinkedIn but do not pay. I probably don’t use it to my advantage. In fact, I don’t use it much at all.”
- “I see it as a tool for both B2B and B2C. But when I see people coming to me and wanting to add me to their network lists, I fear it may be a way to get in to our company accounts.”
- “I do not have a premium account nor do I need one. I just can’t do it all.”
- “I use Salesforce.com, and that’s what gives me my B2B and B2C leads. If I were to use LinkedIn as well, it would just become yet another tool that consumes my time.”
- “It would be good if LinkedIn could talk to Salesforce and if someone updates on LinkedIn, the information would then also update my Salesforce lists.”
- “Of the 500 or so people in our company, I would guess many are on LinkedIn but they have posted information to get their professional information out there [rather than as a sales tool]. It gets your name out there but I’m not sure people have figured out how to use it to their advantage.”
- “I do not use it much because I am not social media savvy. I have just so much time in the day. I don’t know how productive it would be for me in terms of business.”
- “I have not been contacted by LinkedIn regarding my account or upgrading. The fact that they have not communicated with me is not important. But if they are not in touch with the marketing people at our company, which is a billion dollar business, they are missing the boat.”
- “People say LinkedIn is a bona fide sales tool. How? I don’t see it. I have to self-populate to make it effective. We already have something that does that, namely Salesforce. That seems to keep up with our needs. LinkedIn would have to add something, not just mimic or duplicate. It sounds very time-consuming.”
- “If LinkedIn could come up with an integrative feature, either by pulling in information from other directories or services in our industry or by integrating with Salesforce, then there might be a reason to take a second look.”

Sales Navigator

- “I have heard mention of Sales Navigator, and I believe there was a conversation about it at one of our company meetings. Other than that, I know nothing about it.”
- “I haven’t gotten any email or material about it from LinkedIn. If they are only emailing, I think they need to make the contact more personal. You can’t just email people and expect to be effective. You have to be relational. In sales, you can’t rely on email as your primary source of communicating. I would find it easier if someone just called me.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “Some of the emails and contacts made on LinkedIn are not only an intrusion on my time but an intrusion on my privacy.”
- “I don’t care if people find me on LinkedIn. I generally ignore the emails. The whole idea of having to sign in bothers me.”
- “I have not heard any negative comments, but I also have not heard anyone in our organization or community say, ‘Oh my god, you have got to use LinkedIn.’”

People say LinkedIn is a bona fide sales tool. How? I don’t see it. I have to self-populate to make it effective. We already have something that does that, namely Salesforce. That seems to keep up with our needs. LinkedIn would have to add something, not just mimic or duplicate. It sounds very time-consuming.

*Sales Professional
Photography Company*

9. Owner of a travel agency

This source has been in the travel business for more than 20 years and has little interest in using LinkedIn or other social media to find clients. She has a free LinkedIn account but does not use the site much. She prefers a more old-school approach to sales, which includes as much face-to-face contact as possible. Her clientele tends to be older and not as plugged into social media.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I’m trying hard not to touch social media, including LinkedIn.”
- “Although I have a LinkedIn account, I’m not finding it too much fun and too time-consuming to keep up with.”
- “I’m [finding clients] the old-fashioned way—with a smile and handshake. I’ve gone back to doing more social things like hosting coffees, talks and seminars, and networking at events. It’s been loads of fun.”
- “I’m finding so many of my clients and friends are just done with social media taking up too much of their time and looking forward to what comes next.”
- “I spend about \$300 monthly on my marketing efforts at this time, which includes a Starbucks gift card for referrals.”
- “I did look at hiring someone part-time to manage my social media but, after much anguish, opted to go back to what got to me where I am today. I find that face-to-face contact is way more fun. You can actually see the warts that might be touched up online.”
- “I tried social media, but it’s too exhausting for me. Plus, most of my clients are mature and aren’t interested.”

Sales Navigator

- N/A

Potential Pitfalls

- N/A

3) LinkedIn Users

All three sources, who tend to be on the receiving end of sales pitches, said they generally are comfortable with being contacted via LinkedIn. One, however, said he would leave the site if it becomes overrun with solicitations. Another said he does not mind sales contacts through LinkedIn because they are easy to ignore. Only one of the three sources pays for a premium LinkedIn account. One source thinks LinkedIn is a great tool for B2B sales, while another believes the Sales Navigator subscription could be attractive to sales professionals.

KEY SILO FINDINGS

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- 1 of 3 pays for a premium subscription.
- 2 use LinkedIn to share information with contacts.
- 1 thinks LinkedIn is a great B2B sales tool.

Sales Navigator

- 2 are not familiar with Sales Navigator.
- 1 believes it could be desirable for salespeople.

Potential Pitfalls

- 3 are receptive to being contacted via LinkedIn.
- 1 would pull his profile if solicitations become too common.
- 1 does not like anonymous viewing of profiles.

1. IT executive for a utility company

This source would not hesitate to pull his profile from LinkedIn if a tool like Sales Navigator makes it easier for salespeople to find and contact him. He gets very few solicitations through LinkedIn right now, but is more open to such

sales contacts than to a cold call or email. He has a premium account and uses the site regularly for discussions and networking.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “I get a sales message via LinkedIn about once per month, and it’s usually a warm contact—someone that is either in my network or is associated with someone in my network. I don’t believe I’ve ever received a cold sales contact via LinkedIn, and that’s a big part of the value proposition for me.”
- “I am more apt to respond to a LinkedIn sales contact because it is less frequent, targeted, and is often recommended by someone in my network. Also, contacts from salespeople via LinkedIn are almost always the result of meeting them personally at a networking event, so I know that the contact is coming.”
- “Outside of LinkedIn, I receive anywhere from four to 10 cold calls per day, and anywhere from 25 to 60 cold emails per day. I’ve also noticed an increasing trend of vendors sending me cold appointments for 30-minute introductory calls; they just pop a meeting on my calendar hoping that nobody will figure out that it’s a cold call.”
- “The level of sales contacts is such that I only answer calls when I recognize the number, and I never accept cold appointments for introductory calls or meetings.”
- “LinkedIn is a relative island of tranquility when it comes to being contacted by vendors. Outside of LinkedIn, the situation is completely out of control, and I am saturated with vendors, large and small, who want to make sure I have an opportunity to get into their sales funnel.”
- “I am more receptive to LinkedIn contacts because the LinkedIn contacts have taken the time to get involved with my network, they are associated with others in my network, and they are not spamming me to try to get my attention.”
- “I use LinkedIn as a primary location to connect to my network, pass along professional information, share interesting articles that are applicable to my network, participate in discussions, develop original content that my network can use, and locate vendors.”
- “I also use LinkedIn to keep my resume updated and to help people in my network connect to job openings, hiring managers and target companies.”
- “I pay \$40 per month for a premium subscription. I get the ability to view second- and third-degree profiles, which is useful; profile views with names, which is somewhat useful; the ability to send messages to people not in my network, somewhat useful; and some sort of increased level of saved searched, also somewhat useful.”
- “The [subscription] fee is [worth paying] because I don’t want LinkedIn to be laden with ads and a bunch of salespeople checking out my career history and harvesting my demographic information to sell on the information market.”
- “On LinkedIn, you can learn all about me, and it stays relatively private. On Facebook, for example, every piece of my data is harvested, sold and resold to the point that I’ve removed everything from Facebook except my name.”

Sales Navigator

- “I would think that salespeople would find [Sales Navigator] very desirable. It may also turn LinkedIn into another email inbox for users like me, and some—or many—of us will abandon the service in favor of something that charges everyone a subscription fee and keeps it private.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “If I start getting a bunch of cold calls via LinkedIn, I will stop using LinkedIn.”
- “If LinkedIn starts monetizing my account by providing my information to vendors who will do cold sales calls via LinkedIn messaging, the value of LinkedIn will be significantly reduced for me, and I’ll move my information elsewhere.”
- “The value of LinkedIn is that it is outside the spam stream, and I’m willing to pay for the ability to maintain connections with my network without running the risk of being demographically profiled and spammed.”

I am more apt to respond to a LinkedIn sales contact because it is less frequent, targeted, and is often recommended by someone in my network.

IT Executive, Utility Company

If LinkedIn starts monetizing my account by providing my information to vendors who will do cold sales calls via LinkedIn messaging, the value of LinkedIn will be significantly reduced for me, and I’ll move my information elsewhere.

IT Executive, Utility Company

- “LinkedIn is a valuable service because I am able to use it to develop my network. Another key value area is that LinkedIn is outside of my normal email stream so I can be assured that messages in my LinkedIn inbox are from my network and are worth reading. My normal email stream contains a 2-to-1 ratio of spam to relevant messages.”
- “LinkedIn needs to do more to resolve the mystery contacts that then request connections from everyone. I receive several requests to connect each month from an account that has obviously been recently set up, has no relation to what I’m doing at all, and is possibly being used for hacking or hijacking. This is a bigger issue than sales contacts.”

2. COO of a dental technology company

Solicitations through LinkedIn are increasing, but this source is open to such cold contacts because he feels no pressure to respond. He thinks LinkedIn is a good tool for inside sales reps in B2B industries, but he has no need for a premium account. He complained about a feature that allows site users to remain anonymous when viewing his bio. LinkedIn would better serve users by promoting full disclosure and unfettered communication.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “Someone is always contacting me and trying to sell me something. I am contacted by people trying to sell me marketing tools or to trying to sell API to our software. I am even contacted by merger-and-acquisition companies wanting to buy our company.”
- “I am 100% receptive to being found and contacted. I don’t care. I don’t have to respond.”
- “I would say it is being used more as a sales tool. Still, I am not a sales professional, per se. I just see more and more companies trying to proliferate their existence on LinkedIn. If I were an inside sales rep, I would use it for sure because it’s like the Yellow Pages for people looking for B2B contacts.”
- “If I were in sales, yes, I would use it as a lead generating tool. We are B2B, but in our field of dentistry we are not pure-play B2B sellers. The buyers are more like small mom-and-pop shops.”
- “If I were in an industry more aware of social media and outsourcing, then I would definitely use LinkedIn more regularly. But I also see LinkedIn as a tool to market your skills or develop partners or to get a job. People are not really looking to sell consumer products.”
- “I would never pay for a premium account. The site for me is more about people looking up your profile or background or checking experience, and that can be achieved without subscribing to a premium service.”
- “I use it to make business connections. We even created a site and company presence on LinkedIn, well before it become popular.”
- “I am not proactive on the site. I typically contact people when they approach me, if I’m interested.”
- “I have joined groups. Mostly, they seem to be filled with people trying to get another job, or trying to get to people without paying.”
- “Most people use it as a networking tool and to find another job. It is more of a B2B website or a tool to market yourself or your company. Almost everyone on the site is using it as a B2B tool in some way. It’s not really a B2C tool.”

I would never pay for a premium account. The site for me is more about people looking up your profile or background or checking experience, and that can be achieved without subscribing to a premium service.

COO, Dental Technology Company

Sales Navigator

- “I may have gotten some spam about Sales Navigator, but I did not read it. It doesn’t seem like a service that would pay off for us. The email I received came from LinkedIn, but I don’t know what it said because I don’t read spam.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “They need to make it easier to communicate with other people on LinkedIn. They need to lose the Facebook thing of having to friend someone, so to speak, or be a member of a group to contact them. The site still has a Facebook mentality. You have to respond or not respond to potential contacts or leads. Or you have to be in the same network or group.”
- “I don’t like it when someone is looking at my profile and the viewer’s identity is hidden. They should do away with the undisclosed viewing of profiles. It’s a little disturbing. If it truly is intended to be a B2B atmosphere, then everyone should be visible.”
- “At this point, it’s like a telemarketing tool with a deny button. If you send a message to someone on LinkedIn, they can choose to read the message, respond or not respond or block the contactor from sending messages ever again.”

That's where I think LinkedIn is losing out. If you are designed as a B2B professional business site, everyone really needs to have as much contact as possible without constraints."

- "I have not seen them doing anything to control, monitor or remedy abuse."

3. Art gallery owner

This source is more than happy to accept invitations to connect on LinkedIn from artists or others in her field, but is not keen on solicitations from random salespeople. Thus far, such sales contacts have not been a problem. She uses the free LinkedIn account and has accumulated more than 500 contacts. Although LinkedIn approached her more than once via email to upgrade to a paid subscription, she was not convinced that the added features were worth the cost.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- "I've gotten emails asking me to upgrade. I have not decided."
- "I've never been contacted by a salesperson selling anything on LinkedIn."
- "I will post on my page that we're doing a call for entries for an art show. I have a pretty extensive number of connections to artists and their representatives. LinkedIn helps me get out the information to a specific audience very quickly."
- "LinkedIn could be beneficial to a mix of both B2B and B2C. The real benefit is you can be pretty specific in who you're searching for, the kinds of professionals you want to locate."

Sales Navigator

- "I would be interested in using a premium LinkedIn account to make contacts inside large corporations and find out who does procurement of art for their corporate offices."
- "I've heard of Sales Navigator. It looks like a more expensive version of a premium account."
- "I'd pay \$50 to \$100 a month to get my job done, but I don't know if Sales Navigator is something I really need. We have already established connections with a lot of the people we do business with."

Potential Pitfalls

- "I'm pretty open to new contacts [via LinkedIn]. If it's an artist or somebody in the art field, I'll readily connect with them. Random sales pitches, not so much."
- "I'm not aware of anything LinkedIn might be doing to curb abuse of their system. I haven't had any problems."

4) Industry Specialists

Three of these five sources consider LinkedIn a key resource for salespeople to generate leads; one even suggested that savvy sales professionals often pay for a premium LinkedIn account. One source was skeptical of LinkedIn's utility as a sales tool, but said it has the most potential for B2B, especially if it were to create an area to bring together salespeople with those interested in solicitations. One source believes Sales Navigator could be helpful under the right conditions, but said it is expensive. In general, LinkedIn users are receptive to being contacted by others on the site. LinkedIn has done a good job of controlling spam, according to one source.

KEY SILO FINDINGS

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- 2 of 5 have premium subscriptions.
- 4 believe it is a key resource for finding leads.
- 1 said it could be more useful as a sales tool if sales-related activity could be separated from the main site.

Sales Navigator

- 5 are familiar with Sales Navigator.
- 1 thinks it has value in the right situations but is expensive.

Potential Pitfalls

- 3 said people are receptive to being contacted via LinkedIn.
- 1 noted there are apps that mine LinkedIn for data and could undermine in-house prospecting tools.

- 1 described ways LinkedIn is controlling overuse of the site's messaging functions.

1. President of a lead-generation consulting firm for B2B companies

LinkedIn has become a vital sales lead and mining tool, and is less expensive than some other lead-generating services. Seasoned and sophisticated sales professionals typically pay for premium accounts and use LinkedIn to tap, follow and connect with leads. Even industries that have traditionally avoided social media are starting to participate. Software companies that mine LinkedIn data have proliferated; some augment LinkedIn, but others may compete with in-site tools like Sales Navigator.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- "LinkedIn is a very valuable tool. I have friends and clients who use it all of the time. I would say at this point it is 100% a necessity. I use it every day and probably check it a dozen times a day."
- "I have one of the premium accounts and use the paid service at the midlevel."
- "The most savvy salespeople use it, and for the most part they are at least using a premium account, probably at an upper level. It's not a lot of money, and it gives you access to InMail."
- "There are a number of different ways to use LinkedIn. You can use it to participate in groups. It is definitely effective for finding people, checking someone's background. You can definitely use it to find new leads. If a company visits my website or emails me with an anonymous pitch, but I know who the company is, I can go to key contacts and send a specific person a query or an invitation to engage. Or I can ignore them. I use it to join specific groups of interest so I can track discussions or certain people."
- "Pretty much any salesperson in any industry can use it and benefit, across the board. Even the laggard industries are starting to catch up and are using social media. High-tech companies have been savvy all along, but manufacturers and distributors in heavy industry have not been using social media tools until recently. I would say LinkedIn has a potential audience there, and it could be a major upside for the laggard companies."
- "The subscription rate for the premium user is dirt-cheap compared to the traditional companies out there who may charge hundreds of dollars a month for leads. You can get LinkedIn for as low as \$15 to \$20 a month."

Sales Navigator

- "I do not use Navigator at this point. I have heard of it."
- "Our company is not large enough to use it or benefit from it."
- "There are only so many hours in the day for people to surf LinkedIn for leads."

Potential Pitfalls

- "I have not gotten any negative feedback from members when I contact them."
- "There are a couple of companies out there that use LinkedIn to mine its information. They rely on plug-ins that can assist you in finding leads. The company I'm familiar with and use is [SalesLoft](#), which has an application known as [Prospector](#). You can add it to private groups in your LinkedIn account, use it to look up individuals, and then Prospector keeps track of the leads and contacts for you."
- "It is difficult to say whether tools like SalesLoft undermine or augment LinkedIn. LinkedIn has changed some features so that you are not able to get certain information you used to get. I took this to mean that LinkedIn viewed these other plug-ins using them to mine information as a potential threat."
- "There are a couple of companies out there based in India that you can use when you join a group. Joining a group gives you unlimited number of InMails to members of the group, and the tool can then be used to send out mass emails to group members. I tried it a couple of times, but it was not worth the money. The tool sent out hundreds of emails and there was little or no return."
- "There is another company called [Socedo](#) that is similar to SalesLoft, but the tool caters to [mining] Twitter [to find leads]. They approached me, but it costs a couple of hundred dollars a month. I called the president and asked him about it and why it was so expensive, because it's a huge leap when you compare it to LinkedIn's fees. He said it would do much more, but the proof-of-concept isn't there yet so I declined the service."

The most savvy salespeople use it, and for the most part they are at least using a premium account, probably at an upper level. It's not a lot of money, and it gives you access to InMail.

President, Lead-generation Consulting Firm for B2B Companies

2. Founder of a company that trains B2B sales teams on using social media

LinkedIn is great for finding leads and maintaining relationships but not so much for closing deals. There are a wide range of industries for which he has trained sales professionals to use the site. LinkedIn could grow Sales Navigator adoption faster by partnering with outside experts to train people to use it. Sales Navigator can be a great tool, but is expensive and only suited for certain situations.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “Salespeople are using LinkedIn for growing and nurturing their professional network, prospecting, pre-call research and inbound marketing—building visibility and credibility by posting valuable content.”
- “LinkedIn is like a big fly-wheel. It takes longer to ramp up than most [other lead generating tools], but it pays off more over the long haul.”
- “For LinkedIn in general, not Sales Navigator specifically, here are industries I’ve [trained employees to use the site]: Commercial banking, business supplies and equipment, computer hardware and software, financial services, insurance and employee benefits, marketing and advertising, staffing and recruiting, telecommunications.”

Sales Navigator

- “Sales Navigator absolutely [can be helpful to salespeople], but it is expensive and has limitations. It has to be the right type of sales situation for maximum ROI.”
- “LinkedIn’s Sales Solutions group for Sales Navigator is limiting their revenue growth by adopting a model of using only internal professional services to implement and train customers. There is a big community of LinkedIn experts, like me, who could partner with them to drive more business. It’s the same model that worked to fuel Salesforce.com growth the past 15 years. LinkedIn’s approach is difficult and expensive to scale.”

Sales Navigator absolutely [can be helpful to salespeople], but it is expensive and has limitations. It has to be the right type of sales situation for maximum ROI.

*Founder
B2B Social Media Training Company*

Potential Pitfalls

- “[People are] very comfortable [being contacted through LinkedIn]. Everyone realizes they have put their info on the Internet, so I’ve never had a negative reaction in almost four years of training people on LinkedIn.”

3. Principal of a marketing and communications firm, and professor of media and culture at a Virginia university

LinkedIn is valuable mainly for establishing contacts and making professional introductions, while its utility as a selling tool remains unclear. The source questioned whether LinkedIn would evolve into a useful platform for B2B or B2C, but said a good start would be to set aside a separate area on the website for sales pitches, or create a user option for members who are interested in being solicited. She also cited no significant difference in the features available with premium subscriptions other access to more contacts on a monthly basis.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “LinkedIn is an effective recruiting tool. I’m not so convinced that it’s much of a sales tool. I view it as today’s electronic business card.”
- “People want to have business relationships, and with LinkedIn you get a better sense of someone before you actually meet them.”
- “I personally have not gotten any business whatsoever as a result of my LinkedIn profile.”
- “I’m pretty invested in building relationships. I have to be credible and believable and trustworthy. People assess that by looking you in the eye. If you’re selling a service, I think LinkedIn might be more effective than trying to sell a product.”
- “I do have people who approach me to broker an introduction for someone else.”
- “I’ve been seriously considering upgrading to a premium account.”
- “Many people are assaulted by the flow of incoming communications. It’s so much harder today for advertisers, people selling goods and services, to break through the clutter.”

- “LinkedIn has a much more logical place for B2B than B2C. But I also don’t think B2B is an area that’s really been maximized on LinkedIn. So that has potential. Maybe if it was in a separate area of the site where people could interact that way.”
- “Another possibility would be to create options that you could check off if you are interested in receiving sales solicitations. That way, you would only get a pitch when you are interested in buying something.”
- “The different levels of premium service you can buy seem to be about the same, in terms of what you can do. The more expensive subscriptions just let you do more of it month to month. So I think the benefit of a premium service would depend on how much use you need to get out of it each month.”
- “So much about a sales overture is situational. If the prospect is not receptive at the time, it doesn’t really matter how the pitch comes to them. It all depends on how ready you are to hear that message.”

LinkedIn is an effective recruiting tool. I’m not so convinced that it’s much of a sales tool. I view it as today’s electronic business card.

*Principal
Marketing & Communications Firm*

Sales Navigator

- “I don’t know anyone on LinkedIn using Sales Navigator.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “I’ve never gotten any pushback, but I tend to reach out to folks with whom I already have some sort of mutual connection, some thread that makes it difficult for them to just ignore my LinkedIn message. I’d say eight out of 10 times, people are responsive to my LinkedIn messages. But I’m not doing a scattershot approach either.”
- “Facebook offers a cautionary tale in the way they are saturating the site with advertising. LinkedIn needs to be very, very careful so they don’t follow in that same way and find themselves very quickly perceived as less than authentic.”
- “I’m not aware of any constraints they may have placed on site usage. I hope to heck they are doing something to prevent it from becoming so diluted with messages people don’t want to see.”

4. President of a marketing and social media firm

This source sees the value of LinkedIn’s premium subscriptions for full-time salespeople looking for potential customers. LinkedIn’s premium services are not powerful enough as a standalone solution, as most companies still need customer management software to manage the leads they harvest on LinkedIn. The main value of LinkedIn has not changed: It is a repository of accurate information on working professionals and a site for self-promotion.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “LinkedIn is good for identifying and qualifying sales leads.”
- “I have to believe the data is accurate since each person on LinkedIn provides their own information about their professional background. That’s probably LinkedIn’s greatest asset: reliable information.”
- “I think LinkedIn’s sales tools would be more valuable to B2B sellers. I can’t see a lot of benefit for companies selling to consumers. You can use LinkedIn to promote a product or service to consumers, or present information about your business, but I don’t see it as an effective way to initiate sales directly to consumers.”
- “The more expensive accounts give you access to second and third connections in your network. The paid services also offer more communication opportunities. The higher your subscription level, the more InMail you can send.”

Sales Navigator

- “I’ve received one or two emails from LinkedIn about [Sales Navigator]. There’s a free trial, it runs for a month I think, and then there are some different plans to choose from.”
- “I don’t know anyone in my LinkedIn network who’s using Sales Navigator. From what I’ve seen, the value comes from having deeper access to LinkedIn users outside your network.”

I think LinkedIn’s sales tools would be more valuable to B2B sellers. I can’t see a lot of benefit for companies selling to consumers. You can use LinkedIn to promote a product or service to consumers, or present information about your business, but I don’t see it as an effective way to initiate sales directly to consumers.

*President
Marketing & Social Media Firm*

- “I think most large B2B companies would still need to use Salesforce.com or another CRM tool to manage contact with the people you’ve located on LinkedIn. You need a coordinated way of approaching potential clients because you don’t want four or five salespeople from the same company all calling on the same prospect.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “I get a fair number of job inquiries through LinkedIn, people sending me their resume. I’d prefer to have these types of communication sent to the general email at our office, but I guess that’s the whole point of LinkedIn: to connect directly with someone.”
- “I don’t know if LinkedIn is doing anything to prevent salespeople from going overboard with their messaging. It doesn’t seem to be a problem right now.”

5. Founder of a market research firm

LinkedIn has done a great job of discouraging overuse of the site’s internal messaging functions. Site administrators have made it difficult to send mass, automated InMails or to reach out to large numbers of random members. Controlling such spam makes the platform better for users and salespeople.

LinkedIn As a Sales Tool

- “We’ve built a proprietary lead generation tool on top of LinkedIn, which helps us identify the right people and profiles with what we are looking for.”
- “We only reach out to those we have a personal first-person connection with. We don’t reach out to anyone with second, third or fourth connections.”

Sales Navigator

- “I am familiar with Sales Navigator. I believe the market standard is 25% acceptance rate of those who send inquiries through LinkedIn.”
- “I believe the cost of Sales Navigator is \$100 to \$200 per month, and then it scales based on the number of email you send.”

Potential Pitfalls

- “LinkedIn is not spam. They’ve been very careful about that. They actually enacted a couple measures in the last month or two to prevent spam. You can only reach out to people manually, not through automation. This prevents blast emails.”
- “LinkedIn has solved a lot of the spam challenges. About one month ago they turned off the spamming tools, so now you can’t send a message to LinkedIn groups for free. LinkedIn wants you to submit emails to people you know.”
- “They’ve also put thresholds in to restrict you from connecting with a lot more people than are connected to you. In other words, you can’t find random people you want to email, connect with them and then email them, at least not routinely. They have it to prevent a workaround to the spamming issue.”
- “They’ve taken care in the last month or two to make these changes and make it a better site for sales purposes.”

Secondary Sources

The following six secondary sources highlighted the effectiveness of “social selling” compared with cold calling and LinkedIn being the best place to expand brand identity. These sources also focused on Sales Navigator being an effective method of connecting to customers, being used to fill sales pipelines, and being adopted by a Silicon Valley company. Also reviewed was a Sales Navigator app meant to integrate with Salesforce.com.

Social Selling

The following two articles showed social selling increasing leads and LinkedIn being the top social media platform to build brand identity.

Jan. 16 Technorati [article](#)

Social selling is becoming increasingly important to sales professionals in the B2B and B2C space. LinkedIn and Sales Navigator increased leads-to-meeting conversion rates by 50% for LinkedIn’s internal sales reps.

- “Consumers no longer rely entirely on sales personnel to educate them about a product or service; they search the internet or discuss the topic with their peers. Savvy businesses know this, are approaching the sales process differently. This ‘social selling’ relies on building relationships, connections and insights available in social channels to create a better buying and selling experience.”
- “And if you think social selling is merely a B2C phenomena, think again. A recent CEB study reports ‘60% of the B2B buying process in a complex sale is already complete before prospects are willing to engage with a live salesperson.’”
- “Social selling works just as well in a B2B environment as it does in a B2C environment, according to Michael Kelly, of UK-based, Ridge Consulting. ‘The first step is to simply get started,’ Kelly explains. ‘You need to make a commitment to developing a social selling plan and to implementing that plan, and to understand which social media platforms your customers are using.’”
- “LinkedIn is one of the primary social media players, but even they had to be converted to social selling. After the release of tools such as Sales Navigator and TeamLink, LinkedIn’s own sales team began seeing significant results. Ralf VonSosen, the company’s head of marketing for sales solutions notes, ‘We started seeing a 50 percent increase in leads to meeting conversion rates.’”

March 2 Business Insider [article](#)

LinkedIn was described as the best method to expand and build a company’s brand identity, thanks to its user base of white-collar professionals.

- “LinkedIn has developed a special identity—and utility—as the social network for professionals.”
- “Engagement is rising fast on LinkedIn, as the social network becomes a content destination. The social network is also high-income and highly educated, and it has a big international presence. These factors will make LinkedIn increasing compelling to marketers. Already, a survey from Cogent Research finds that LinkedIn is the preferred social network by a wide margin for building a brand identity.”
- “LinkedIn has the advantage of being the place for white-collar professionals to network, meaning its population is highly desirable since it is a high-income and highly educated user base. The best time to post on LinkedIn is Tuesday through Thursday, when professionals are either beginning or finishing their workday.”

[Sales Navigator](#)

These four sources centered on Sales Navigator as an effective method of connecting to customers, its ability to fill sales pipelines with quality prospects, and its adoption by 90% of one Silicon Valley company’s sales force. Also discussed were the mixed reviews of an app to integrate Sales Navigator with Salesforce.com.

Feb. 7 Insurance Business America [article](#)

LinkedIn and its Sales Navigator platform were touted as effective methods of connecting with customers and generating profits for companies. Social media has a 20% success rate, compared with cold calling’s success rate of 3%.

- “While ArCompany Vice President Andrew Jenkins told brokers that cold calling is effective just 3% of the time—versus social media’s 20% success rate—one *IBA* reader added an important caveat.”
- “User Kurt Shaver of The Sales Foundry told readers it takes more than just a new, shiny social media tool to close a sale:”
- ““Business insurance is a relationship business and genuine human connections are what social networks like LinkedIn SHOULD be all about. Achieving that level of proficiency takes more than just the tool, it takes training and coaching from people who have done it before.”
- “Meanwhile, independent agent Brent Kelly agreed with Jenkins, commenting:”
- ““I 100% agree. I wrote a blog post about this a couple months back and took some flak about it, but I truly believe consumers are fed up with interruption marketing.”
- “One of readers’ most popular choices for social networking was LinkedIn. Jenkins told producers LinkedIn traffic spikes between 7 and 9 at night, requiring independents to be able to engage potential users through the networking tool at the right time.”
- “Reader Dan Swift recommended agents utilize sales apps through LinkedIn, such as the LinkedIn Sales Navigator.”

- “We believe so whole heartedly that we have developed a premium subscription available on an enterprise for Insurance agents and brokers.”
- “Indeed, LinkedIn has been connected with enhancing producers profits. According to a report from Putnam Investments, 66% of financial advisors said LinkedIn is their go-to tool to meet new clients as most of their target audience is active on the site. A full 85% of business owners even permit their employees to access LinkedIn at work.”

March 5 Business 2 Community [article](#)

Sales Navigator was used an example of a tool to fill a pipeline of sales leads through filters, custom criteria, ability to save and organize contacts, automatic searches and alerts.

- “Culinary masterpieces don’t often happen overnight though. Pairing sales and social media is a long-term strategy, but the end result can deliver mouth-watering leads.”
- “1. Mix Sales & Marketing Together”
- “When everyone is on the same page, efforts can be integrated to work toward a common goal, such as agreeing on what a qualified lead looks like.”
- “2. Combine Social Media & Good Ol’ Listening Skills”
- “Sales pros are constantly searching. They’re hungry for new prospects, searching for new opportunities and longing for insight to create engaging conversations with these prospects.”
- “Social media is a colossal clue buffet.”
- “Even if you’re not actively participating in social conversations, you can still follow the digital footprints of your prospects, customers and competitors.”
- “3. Infuse Sales Strategy with Solutions”
- “Social media has changed the entire menu, offering a plethora of new opportunities for marketing and sales to work together in the pursuit of lead generation.”
- “To be successful today, sales reps need to fill their own pipeline with high-quality prospects. With LinkedIn Sales Navigator, you can pair your selling skills with the power of social media to:”
- “Find the best prospects for each solution you offer using premium search filters”
- “Prospect efficiently with lead lists created using your own custom criteria. Save and organize your contacts to easily find and view expanded profiles whenever you want”
- “Be prepared to capitalize on timely opportunities at scale”
- “Speed up your sales cycle by instantly broadening your network and uncovering hidden connections with TeamLink”
- “Automate prospecting by setting up automatic searches and alerts.”
- “These efforts combined allow your sales team to increase interactions with prospects and customers, enhancing the value of those relationships. Social media when united with lead nurturing are proving to be a winning combo for sales professionals and increasing your company’s bottom line.”

Jan. 8 Silicon Valley Business Journal [article](#)

Sales Navigator is being quickly adopted and showing returns for a Silicon Valley company; 90% of Docusign’s sales force uses the LinkedIn solution daily.

- “Loren Alhadeff didn’t know what to expect when his senior sales reps at Docusign tried out LinkedIn’s new sales lead generation product early last year.”
- “But they took to it right away and began using it every day to research sales prospects. Within three weeks, he rolled it out to the whole sales organization at the San Francisco-based online digital signature company.”
- “‘Right now it’s our second most important sales tool, after Salesforce,’ Alhadeff said of LinkedIn’s Sales Navigator product. ‘Over 90 percent of our sales staff is using it now every day.’”
- “Analysts say that LinkedIn could revolutionize corporate sales in the same way it transformed corporate recruiting. Recruiting products alone have driven a tenfold increase in the Mountain View company’s revenue past four years to its first \$1 billion year in 2012.”
- “‘We think their ability to expand beyond recruiting is tremendous,’ Brian Fitzgerald of Jefferies & Co. told me. ‘Sales is a 12-month-a-year, 24-hour proposition, involving a lot more salespeople than there are recruiters.’”
- “CEO Jeff Weiner warned analysts in the company’s most recent earnings call in November that it is still ‘early days’ with adoption of Sales Navigator. But he believes the potential is large, based on the number of salespeople and

business development professionals signed up with LinkedIn compared to the number of recruiters and hiring managers.”

- “Sales Navigator is offered as a premium account that provides a number of features aimed at ‘social selling,’ including:”
- “Lead Builder: This can be used to search the LinkedIn database by seniority, function, industry, location, company and company size.”
- “Team Link: This can be used to find people in your own organization who may be connected to people inside a company you are selling to and provide an introduction.”
- “InMails: Users of Sales Navigator can email any LinkedIn member, even if they aren’t in their network.”
- “Profile Organizer: This provides a place to store information about prospects and keep track of contact info and history of correspondence.”
- “CRM integration: Sales Navigator can be used to provide insights to users’ Salesforce or Microsoft Dynamics dashboards.”
- “DocuSign’s Alhadeff said his team recently used Sales Navigator when they were having trouble working with the person they had to deal with at a large insurance company.”
- “‘We were able to triangulate through LinkedIn who inside that organization was the decision-maker who corresponded to other insurance companies we do business with,’ he said. ‘We were able to close in one month what we had scheduled as a six-month project.’”

[User reviews of the Sales Navigator app for Salesforce.com](#)

Salesforce.com customers have given 3.4 out of 5 stars to an app designed to integrate with Sales Navigator. Some users described the app as a great way to look for leads, but others complained about the \$30/month cost and trouble getting proper integration.

- “This is a terrific way to prospect. Having my LinkedIn contacts and prospect list inside my Salesforce is great time saver. Being able to continue prospecting within Salesforce is the only way to go!”—June 22, 2013
- “No way I can recommend this app at the current price. Common, \$5 a month is something I might be willing to pay. \$30 is ridiculous.”—Nov. 8, 2011
- “I’ve been a user of both Salesforce and LinkedIn. I saw the opportunity to marry both and jumped at it. I downloaded the integrator, upgraded my LinkedIn service, follow all the installation directions and it flat out doesn’t work. It takes me back to grant privileges [sic] which I’ve already done a millions [sic] times.”—Feb. 10, 2014
- “Having this visibility inside of my SF system is extremely useful for identifying new prospects. I was already using SF and LinkedIn Navigator separately. Having them integrated is very use powerful and time efficient. I would highly recommend to others.”—Jan.28, 2014
- “This is a good little app if you are happy to have the relevant linkedin data visible on the lead, contact, account or opportunity. So if you are happy to have the Salesforce and LinkedIn customer or business info in one place then this is the app for you. However, this app offers little or nothing in terms of real integration. For example, it does not offer any integration with your existing contact data. To make any updates, say to the address, you will need to copy and paste from the LinkedIn Salesforce entity section into the relevant Salesforce field.”—Dec. 16, 2013
- “While I very much like LinkedIn as a service for myself, the prospecting tool and integration with SFDC is not up to par at this time. The install is more than just downloading the app and using, it’s an integrated process that requires manual editing on the page layouts to see the details of potential LinkedIn info. Unless you have multiple page layouts, it is available to see for every profile that has access and cannot be hidden if the internal user doesn’t have a premium account.”—Oct. 23, 2013

Additional research by Carolyn Marshall and Steve Evans

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LinkedIn Corp.

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