

The How To....

Use LinkedIn Groups for Business

The whole attitude to LinkedIn is purpose built to promote your business on it. If you want to be seen as the person to go to and as the “expert” this is a fabulous platform to promote yourself on. The years of CV’s are over and this is now not only a recruiting tool but a marketing platform.

Typically people who have a LinkedIn profile understand the value of having one so will make the effort to participate in conversation if they are in a Group.

Offline networking is still favoured of course but LinkedIn is the next best thing if you use the Groups properly. It can’t be just used as a sales resource however, it’s not meant for that. If you place yourself as a salesperson through this platform it will do you no favours at all. So spamming group after group is a huge no-no. You would no more do it in real life.

Join groups

You can join up to 50 Groups. Find industry, topic and location specific groups that contain concentrations of people that you would like to network with and join them. Spend time looking at the level of participation and conversations. If all you find is updates with members promoting their businesses move on as this group will be of little benefit.

LinkedIn has a “groups you may like” function that suggests groups based on your current profile and connections.

Ironically, the best groups for lead generation are those that don’t tolerate blatant self-promotion.

Connect with members

Once you’ve joined a group, you have a natural common connection with each group member and LinkedIn gives you the ability to connect based on the mutual group membership. It’s a little thing, but it’s a step beyond simply saying you want to connect.

Reach out and make some connections and very simple introductions as to why you joined the group.

Look for active members and add relevant replies to a number of posts. This starts the process of some one on one conversation and, since your replies are publicly available to all group members, you can use this technique to demonstrate that you have a lot to offer.

Create groups

Once you get the hang of Groups you should consider creating your own topic group. This is not a company group, it’s one that is set up to discuss a topic that your prospects, customers, partners, and even competitors might find worthwhile.

A word of warning – if you want your group to grow and give you the ability to benefit by virtue of your status as the group’s manager, you have to commit the time to curate, moderate, stimulate and facilitate group participation.

You must add starter content that gets people talking. You must participate in conversations. You must promote. And above all you must not tolerate spam and self-promotion. Tell people this is your intent up front, give them one warning and kick offenders out. If you don't set this tone from the very beginning the group members won't want to stick around.

To get the most from your group manager role create a landing page on your own website that promotes the idea behind the group and encourages visitors to join. This will deepen your connection to the group and help people better understand what the group is all about.

Lastly, use, but don't abuse, the announcements function. As a group manager you can send direct announcements to all group members via email. This is a great way to continue to keep your group and its activity front and centre.

Five Contacts

Once you start to get more active on LinkedIn make it a habit to reach out to five connections each week with the sole purpose of saying hi, thank you, I see you got a promotion, wonder what you've been working on, etc.