



Digital  
Marketing  
Institute

# INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

Transcript

# Increasing Engagement

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# **LESSON 1: UNDERSTANDING YOUR BUYER**

## Buyer Profile and Organization

[4.1.1.1] The 4 key steps of social selling (based on the LinkedIn model) are:

- 1. Build a profession brand (mentioned in earlier modules)
- 2. Connect with the right people
- 3. Engage with insights
- 4. Build relationships

This module will focus primarily on 3 and 4.

[4.1.1.2] Before engaging prospects, we need to understand them. One way to do that is observing their behavior on social platforms. The more you know about your prospect's background, interests and needs, the better equipped you will be to build rapport and engagement.

[4.1.1.3] In many cases, especially in a B2B context, the platform you will be using to observe and engage with clients will be LinkedIn. LinkedIn is free, and if you use it properly, you can gather insights that will help you engage with prospects. The premium version of linked in for Sales Professionals, called Sales Navigator, gives you a range of enhanced features to build client and prospect insights.

[4.1.1.4] You can also map the buyer relationship within their organization to see who they're connected to and whether they're a decision-maker and influencer. You can use a buyer persona table like the one here. You can also use LinkedIn to build a fuller picture of the buyers and influencers in your prospect's organisation. For example, look at who they're connected with, and their levels in the organisation. In Sales Navigator, you can get an account level view which shows you leads, levels and relationships between people in a target account.

## Buyer Needs and Motivation

[4.1.2.1] Build up a picture of buyer's content preferences by reviewing what they share/like/comment on/engage with.

[4.1.2.2] What's key to understanding buyers is knowing about their interests and needs. Check their recent posts on LinkedIn. Check what they have liked, shared and commented on. Check what LinkedIn Groups they are members of. Check what connections you have in common. If you have close mutual connections, you can gather information through them, ahead of asking for an introduction. All of this helps us understand what challenges and problems your prospect is facing - so you can engage them with insights that are useful and relevant.

[4.1.2.3] LinkedIn Groups are a great way to join communities of shared interest. You can join up to 50 groups that match the interests of your prospects and customers. Groups are a great place to spend time observing the behavior of prospects and customers. You can see the conversations they are active in and what they care about. And you can join the conversation and add your insights. You can search groups to build up your list of prospects. For example, you should join the social selling group on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8209916/> and search in LinkedIn for groups that are relevant to your sector. You can see on any prospect's home page what groups they're in. If you use Sales Navigator, you can also see which groups you have in common - a great way to build rapport with someone.

[4.1.2.4] We are focusing on LinkedIn here because it is the key B2B network for social selling, but let's not overlook the others: Twitter is less formal than LinkedIn and while B2B buyers don't join Twitter to be sold to, but it is a great place to keep in touch and share insights. Because of its reach and immediacy, it is a vital platform for social selling. Facebook also matters for B2B selling because your customers and prospects are there too, although the type of engagement is different. You wouldn't start a sales conversation on Facebook, but you can build wider knowledge of a prospect's passions and interests. As any sales professional knows - if you have a sports team or holiday destination or hobby in common with a prospect, you have a great way to start a conversation. Just take care not to sound like a stalker! Facebook is also increasingly a place to host live video with high levels of engagement. When it comes to sharing insights, don't overlook it.

# **LESSON 2: ACQUIRING THE RIGHT CONTENT**

## **Content Relevance for Buyers**

[4.2.1.1] Before you engage a prospect with your insights, you need to have empathy with your prospect - based on your research, you need to understand their needs, habits, challenges and preferences as much as possible before engaging with them. The focus should be on the buyer's needs, not your desire to win the business. Think of engagement as active listening. You would not walk up to someone at a party or conference and start talking about how great your product is. You'd have a conversation and you'd listen to what their needs are. It's the same on social.

[4.2.1.2] Effective social selling means a focus on buyer's needs – not your need to win business.

[4.2.1.3] We're living in a world of information overload; more content is produced than we can keep up with. According to a report from CNN, we're exposed to 74 Gigabytes of data every day. All of us, buyers included are affected by this and not only is there insufficient time to deal with it, most of the information is disorganized and unsolicited. Your job as a social seller is not to just add to it. It's to organize information for your prospects and help them discover useful and relevant insights. Think of yourself as their concierge for insights. That's a great way of building a reputation and a trusted and helpful advisor.

[4.2.1.4] As professionals, our job is to filter information for our customers and networks, making sure that we don't add to content overload by sharing information that's irrelevant, seller-centric, overt marketing, pushes too quickly got the next step, doesn't provide clear value or is overly generic.

## **Content to Engage Prospects**

[4.2.2.1] For a sales professional, understanding industry trends, company news and competitive developments is the baseline. That's where sales intelligence comes in, which is where we combine our views with those within the industry, including buyers. Time Riesterer of Corporate Visions shares some brutal statistics for sales professionals - 60% of buyers make no decision at the end of the buyer's journey. In other words, at the end of the buyer journey they make no decision at stick with their current solution. So, the biggest challenge for sales professionals is to help people make a change. That's where compelling sales intelligence comes in.

[4.2.2.2] You need to continually develop your research habits and skills so that you can find content which will engage prospects so you can achieve your objective. You can do this by being clear on the questions you need to have the best answers to for your prospects.

[4.2.2.3] Focus on "why change?" and not "why you?" in your social selling content research.

[4.2.2.4] Also, it's important to not just Google and reshare what everyone else is sharing. You can also use filters and other tools to find relevant and trending information and control the kind of content you need.

[4.2.2.5] There are some great tools available also which you can set up to locate relevant content in areas you are interested in on a regular basis like HubSpot, BuzzSumo, AndersPink and Sprout Social. And of course, Sales Navigator.

[4.2.2.6] You can also increase your credibility and authority by finding influencers for a topic, following them and building a relationship. Following people on LinkedIn is as easy as it is on Twitter. It's a good first step to building engagement with them. Their updates on LinkedIn and other social

networks will get a lot of views and comments. So if you can share your insights as comments on their updates, you're going to be in good company.

[4.2.2.7] You need to know how to search for and find relevant content in a specific area. - For example, you might search for trending content in a specific sector like Pharma. Or content on a topic but with a certain angle - for example, Big Data but only as it relates to Fintech. Anders Pink is a useful tool for doing this. It'll bring relevant content on your target sectors, people you follow on twitter, and preferred sites and sources, updating every few hours.

For tracking a buyer organization's social activity on LinkedIn - use Sales Navigator. You can search for prospects and key accounts, filter information on them by over 20 criteria, save your searches. and get updates on key social posts and activities by the buyer. For example, if a client moves job, if a target account grows by 15%, if they merge with another company, and of course if they share LinkedIn updates.

[4.2.2.8] Tools like Anders Pink and BuzzSumo will enable you to search for and track influencers in a given topic, e.g. the top followed or most engaged with influencers in FinTech. You can save them to a list and see what content they share on social networks, so you don't miss an opportunity to engage with their content and share the most relevant content with prospects on LinkedIn or elsewhere.

## **Created vs Curated Content**

[4.2.3.1] One way of engaging prospects with insights is to create some original content of your own: a blog post, a short guide or presentation, a podcast or video, or a combination of these and the many more forms of content available. That's great to do, but of course, busy sellers with targets to meet have a limited amount of time available for content creation. However, you don't have to create content to be an effective social seller, and you do not need a content marketing team behind you to generate it. You can curate content and focus on creating your own insights and opinions on the content you share. What do we mean by content curation here? Curation involves finding quality, relevant content from external sources beyond your company's on content, adding your insights to it, and sharing it to engage your target audiences on social. It's a vital part of social selling. Curating third party content and adding your take on it makes it more relevant to buyers/prospects. It's less time consuming than creating new content, and it helps you stay top of mind with prospects.

[4.2.3.2] So what's the right balance between creating original content, and curating content from other sources? There's a rule in social media sharing called the 5:3:2 rule, which recommends that 50% of the content you share should be curated from 3rd party sources relevant to your audience, 30% should be content you've created and 20% should be content that's more personal - fun, inspirational and human interest. Sometimes we can forget that behind the thumbnail image of a prospect on LinkedIn or twitter is a human being. Be human in how you engage with them, not a sales machine. Keep in mind - social selling is about engaging with insights, not leading with your sales pitch.

[4.2.3.3] Of course, you need to have some of your own content. The content you create can be used to fill the gaps in target content, with the right messaging that you can't find elsewhere. And of course, it doesn't literally have to be you creating that content, it can be a collaboration with your marketing colleagues.

[4.2.3.4] No matter how well thought through it is, the content you create can't cover all of the needs and interests of your buyers. If you only share in-house content, you are talking about yourself



exclusively which is no way to engage buyers. You and your business do not have a monopoly on good ideas. Buyers and prospects are looking for more variety.

Curating content shows that you track content from a range of sources and that you can be considered a trusted advisor who is tapped into the trends that matter to them. If you share quality content that's aligned to their interests, and you add your own insights you're acting as an information concierge to prospects, helping them to learn. That's a powerful way to engage prospects.

[4.2.3.5] Curation is easier and more time-efficient than creating your own content. Curation can also help make the content creation process easier. There are many different options for creating content cost effectively based on what you've curated. For example, you can put together lists, a round-up (e.g. of events in a sector), reports or book reviews, trend analysis e.g. "5 recent pieces of AI and what they tell us..."

Here are a range of examples of curated content organized as list posts, expert tips and round-ups.

[4.2.3.6] Curation and creation of content are collaborative activities. You don't have to do this alone. It's important to see if there's an option to collaborate, for example between Sales and Marketing to create content for prospects - you might be able to influence the content roadmap or collaborate directly to create target content.

[4.2.3.7] You also need to provide content with a more rounded view from broader sources. This builds your credibility as a trusted advisor and is a better approach than leading with in-house branded content and a sales message. Let's say you are in eLearning, and you're looking to find corporate clients who need eLearning solutions. Which is better to share: your brochure, or a report you've read on trends in eLearning, along with your personal insights, mapped to what you've seen the prospect saying are their challenges in comments on LinkedIn? One of those takes more time than the other, but it's the one that's going to build engagement, trust and open up a conversation.

[4.2.3.8] Remember that you must establish visibility, trust, value BEFORE you move into sales focused content. Everyone understands that you are selling. but too much too soon and you are just cold calling with social channels. So, build relationships and trust first. Social selling requires patience. Engaging with insights is not a one-time thing. You need to build rapport over time.

# **LESSON 3: ADDING INSIGHT FOR BUYERS**

## **Curation to Support Engagement**

[4.3.1.1] A key part of the modern sales professional role is as a curator of useful content. You need to have an outward looking view. Think of yourself as a market scanner, keeping close watch on what's happening in your prospects' business, in your competitors', and in the trends and developments in your market or sector.

[4.3.1.2] The primary benefit of curating content is to engage customers and build customer and market intelligence, that you can use in engaging prospects.

[4.3.1.3] There is also a long term benefit for sellers in staying up-to-date, making sure you're seen to be relevant within the market and also for career advancement. You will be more attuned to opportunities in the market if you're outward looking.

[4.3.1.4] When sales and marketing work together, they can form a social selling dream team. Sales teams are close to their prospects and customers. They can let marketing colleagues know the type of content that will engage their audiences. Marketing teams can then support the content curation activity, finding relevant content and saving it to make it easier for sales professionals to share and engage prospects. They can also use the market insights from sales professionals to plan which originally created content will have the most value in the sales process. This brings sales and marketing closer together, aligned for the customer.

[4.3.1.5] All of us in sales need to become trusted advisors. In order to be a trusted business advisor, you need to have advice worth sharing with your prospects and clients, and you need to build trust by sharing it in an engaging way, with the right people, at the right time – and not trying to convert the conversation into a sales one too quickly.

## **Analyzing and Filtering Content**

[4.3.2.1] That means building an ongoing habit of not sharing unless you make sense of the content first. It's easy to just click "like" or write "nice article" on a piece of content. But it's far more effective to take the time to share your thoughts on it. Why did you find the content relevant, how do you think it might be helpful for a prospect? Take the time to do this step properly and it will increase the likelihood of a prospect engaging with what you've shared with them.

[4.3.2.2] You need to be discerning when you're filtering content – focus on high quality and relevance for buyers, ask yourself what's in it for them? Craft targeted messages to make it relevant. This is where quality matters a lot more than quantity. You are what you share – so only share what you personally endorse.

[4.3.2.3] It's always worth looking at impactful content you've shared in the past, and what your prospects have shared. This will help you identify new content types that will help engage prospects as part of the social selling process.

## **Adding Insight to Progress the Opportunity**

[4.3.3.1] Adding insights to curated content will make it relevant to prospects, it's vital to include this as part of how you share and engage.

[4.3.3.2] Here's an example of sharing a piece of curated content on LinkedIn. It has a personal message. It explains why the content is being shared with the prospect, and the sharer's thoughts on

it. It includes a question to keep the conversation going. You can of course find your own style for this.

[4.3.3.3] How to transition from insight to action will always be key, how to convert and call for action at the right moment.

There are key indicators that you're moving from engaging with insights into truly building relationships with prospects. First off, you may be sharing content as part of a way of connecting with a new prospect. If they accept your invitation, you are on your way. Don't move into a sales conversation. Thank them for accepting your invitation. Here's a great place to ask them what type of content they are most interested in. If you've done your research, you can suggest some topics to them, or say, "I've noticed you seem to be interested in or facing a challenge around ..." and refer to the intelligence you've built up on them. Keep on sharing to engage them. Be patient. You need to monitor if they have liked or commented on what you have shared with them. On LinkedIn you will get notifications on this. When you've established trust and rapport, you will know when it is the right moment to suggest a next step - which is usually securing a meeting or call to discuss in more detail. Now they are truly a prospect in your pipeline.

# **LESSON 4: SHARING CONTENT TO BUILD ENGAGEMENT**

## Sharing Demonstrates Value

[4.4.1.1] As we've said, you are what you share. The content you share, whether it's your own created content or curated from other sources, signals your value to the buyer community - it's a reflection of your trust and credibility.

[4.4.1.2] Therefore it's important to maintain standards around what you share. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is it timely?
- Is it relevant?
- Is it targeted?
- Have you added insights that bring context?
- Are you adding value for the prospect?

[4.4.1.3] For B2B sales, LinkedIn will be top of your list in terms of social selling. Half of all B2B buyers use LinkedIn as a resource when making purchasing decisions. In 2016, LinkedIn surpassed Facebook and Twitter for social shares of B2B content, even when that content isn't published on LinkedIn.com

[4.4.1.4] LinkedIn provides you with a range of different ways to engage prospects with your insights.

## Sharing Content with Buyers on LinkedIn

[4.4.2.1] The various ways to engage on LinkedIn include: Reaching out to prospects and connecting with them. Whenever you do this, share something useful. Of course, this should be based on your research of their needs and interests in the ways we've covered earlier. You can build up and research leads through Sales Navigator. You can also send prospects an InMail, which is email within LinkedIn. The advantage of InMail is that some prospects won't allow you to connect directly with them on the free LinkedIn service. But use them wisely as you only get a number of credits each month. Another option is to ask for an introduction, if you're connected with someone who is connected to a prospect. Search for your mutual connections and look at 2nd and 3rd degree connections who could introduce you. Once you are connected you can message prospects directly to engage them with curated or created content. You can also share your insights in public posts and updates on LinkedIn by mentioning them to draw their attention to what you've shared. You can also do this through LinkedIn groups where you are both members.

[4.4.2.2] When you're sharing on LinkedIn as a public update, remember: it's a professional network, so keep the tone professional. Add value and insights to anything you share. Ask questions to start a dialogue - social selling is a conversation, not a broadcast. And do not lead with your sales pitch. It's fine to be proud of your company and product, and of course you will want to promote what you do but do it in a way that shows how you support your customers and solve their problems.

[4.4.2.3] Preamble: One of your goals on LinkedIn is to connect with people who can become buyers over time and to add value to those conversations. Connecting with someone you don't know can be daunting. However, if you're reaching out to an individual, it's presumably because you've done some research on them and decided they're an important person for you to connect with. So, you should have enough insights to share some content they will find useful. An industry report they may not have seen, an insight from a competitor's activities, or a comment on something their business is doing - you will make a good impression by making it of value to them. You will need to add a

personalized message: say why you're sharing it with them, why you're sharing - what you think is useful about it. Ask a question - you're trying to build engagement and start a conversation.

Timing matters when you're sharing on social networks. LinkedIn gets more engagements Tuesday to Thursday and is very quiet on weekends. So, if you're sharing a new post or update publicly, think about when it will have most impact and reach. <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/best-times-to-post-on-social-media/>

[4.4.2.4] Another great way to share content on LinkedIn is through PointDrive. PointDrive is like PowerPoint within LinkedIn. You can use it to create a presentation and share with prospects. This can include video, images, links to content. It's a great way to curate a range of insights and combine with your own thoughts and content in a nice presentation for prospects. The advantage of doing this through LinkedIn is that you're not sending large attachments, which may be off-putting to buyers and may get blocked. Also, you can track open rates and views, which gives you more insights on who is engaged with the content.

[4.4.2.5] Engaging with insights is not a one-time thing. Regularly sharing and messaging keeps you front of mind and also builds trust over a period of time.

[4.4.2.6] LinkedIn Groups are a great way to tap into communities of shared interest and build relationship. Groups are based on shared interests, think of them as mini professional networks within LinkedIn. Search for groups using keywords in LinkedIn to see which ones you should be a member of in your industry. And of course, check which groups your prospects are members of, and join those. You will usually need to request to join and wait to be accepted by the group administrator.

[4.4.2.7] Once you're in a group you can:

- Start a discussion: Share a piece of curated content and invite discussion.
- Add to a discussion: Read commentary, join the discussion, share a useful link. Here you could @mention a prospect to draw their attention to it.
- Message individual group members: You can direct message up to 15 members of a group per month (more if you have a Premium account). As always, be respectful and don't overshare, build a relationship first.
- Connect with Group members: When the time is right, invite engaged group members to connect with you personally, but again don't rush this - build trust and be helpful first. Good group etiquette on LinkedIn (or anywhere else):
- Don't hijack the topic to promote yourself or your company - many groups will have a no self-promotion rule. Sharing relevant third-party curated content is a great way to show you're here to help, not push your product or service.
- Acknowledge views and comments in group discussions
- Be helpful and responsive - respond to comments and questions
- Add value and build trust with your insights

You can also start your own Group and invite others to join.

## **Sharing Content on Other Networks**

[4.4.3.1] We've focused on LinkedIn primarily so far, as it is by far the most important social network for B2B social selling. But don't overlook Facebook. Your prospects are on Facebook too. Facebook has communities you can join and share content within. Typically it's more for B2C, promoting offers

and engaging users with your consumer brand. It is also a great place to share live video using Facebook Live.

[4.4.3.2] You should also share on Twitter. Your prospects are likely to be on Twitter too, so connect and share with them there as well. Twitter is less formal than LinkedIn, and here you can share wider content, including fun, personal and inspirational content.

[4.4.3.3] Three steps for sharing on Twitter are:

- **BE CONSISTENT:** If you share once and forget about it, so will everyone else. The volume of content in people's timelines mean that it's easily missed. Sharing the same content multiple times on Twitter is acceptable – consider different days and time zones to spread it out for best effect.
- **PERSONALISE WITH INSIGHTS:** As with LinkedIn, don't just reshare or Retweet – add a comment to make it personal – though keep it brief – even though twitter as relaxed its 140-character limit, it is not the place for long posts. Link to relevant content.
- **@MENTION PEOPLE:** Like LinkedIn, you can draw attention to your shared content by mentioning people on Twitter who you think will find it relevant. You can also share to Twitter from LinkedIn, which can be efficient as you can share to multiple networks at once – though bear in mind you may want to customize what you share on Twitter and change the tone and message

[4.4.3.4] All social networks have specific times when it's best to share. Keep these in mind when you're building up your daily and weekly social selling routine.

## Building Deeper Engagement

[4.4.4.1] Social selling means building a community of prospects who include people that someday – probably not today – will buy from you. While quantity of followers and connections is important for social selling, quality matters. You want to build an audience of engaged followers. Building authority and relationships takes time and patience. Be selective about where you are going to invest your time. Doing research on prospects, crafting content to share with them, and tracking how they engage with it all takes time. Have a target list of prospects and focus your effort.

[4.4.4.2] If you want to get prospects attention and nurture a relationship, show them you're listening. Curate and share their content to build a relationship. So, build dialog by being responsive, don't just broadcast. If they like or comment on content you've shared publicly, thank them and continue the discussion with a question. If they respond to an invitation to connect, thank them and share something useful. If they message you, get back as quickly as you would if your best client messaged you. Show them you are a responsive, trusted advisor.

[4.4.4.3] You also need to listen carefully for prospect signals so that you know when to engage in conversation. AS we've said – views, likes, shares and comments are all signals of engagement. Acknowledge them and keep the conversation going with fresh insights and dialogue with your prospects.

[4.4.4.4] Remember you're doing this to help keep your network engaged and to bring them useful content they wouldn't otherwise find. So, you need to ask for feedback to know if it's working for them. Once you're connected with your key prospects, you can ask them this question.



[4.4.4.5] You can build a habit of social selling by spending just 60 minutes a day on it. If 60 minutes sounds a lot, bear in mind the time you're saving by not searching for content on multiple sites and sources for curation, if you use a tool. Break it in to sections throughout your day, building a routing for seeking out new content, making sense of it and adding your insights, and then sharing with prospects through multiple channels. To build trust you need to build visibility and presence with your prospects. Perry Van Beek calls this being ATOMIC: Always Top of Mind in Your Community. That means taking action every day: sharing, engaging and responding to your prospects.

