

# A COMPLETE GUIDE TO DIGITAL B2B LEAD GENERATION



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#### INTRODUCTION

While search and digital marketing is common practice for B2C businesses, many B2B companies still take the view that traditional marketing, such as channel partnerships, a direct sales force, networking events and word of mouth, are more appropriate for their market.

While these methods undoubtedly remain effective, the relevance of online visibility is telling, given that <u>61% of all B2B decision-makers start their process with a web search, and 71% won't have a conversation with a salesperson until they've undertaken their own online research.</u>

The truth is that many B2B stakeholders can be hesitant to invest in digital marketing, or it gets pushed onto the back burner with the attitude: "We don't have time for that", or "We don't have money to invest in that..."

In truth, a little investment in an online strategy can generate enormous ROI.

# Precise targeting for more effective lead gen

In most B2B environments, the goal of your digital lead generation strategy is to drive traffic to your website or engage with your business in another way - but these leads need to be relevant - marketing qualified leads (MQLs - those who have expressed interest in your business) or sales qualified leads (SQLs - those who may be at a stage to purchase) - in order to be worthwhile pursuing.

Efficiency in identifying and nurturing leads is especially important in b2b, where the sales cycle is much longer than b2c - it takes a longer term investment to nurture leads to fruition.

Digital marketing has a significant advantage over traditional in this respect - as it allows you to precisely target prospects with different levels of intent, eg, through identifying the keywords people are using to find you online, segmentation for online advertising, etc.

For B2B especially, your digital strategy is also important to support other sales channels by showcasing your brand's expertise and thought leadership when prospects are researching your company.

#### Demonstrable results

In the business world, it's results that matter most. It's easy to track and measure the performance of your efforts online, to demonstrate ROI to stakeholders and, importantly, to tweak your strategy to do more of what works and less of what doesn't.

This eBook takes you through the digital activities you should be using to improve your visibility, generate engagement with relevant individuals who are actively looking for businesses like yours, nurture leads and develop your pipeline.

# SEO (SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION)

Research shows us that around two thirds of your prospective clients are looking for what you offer online using search engines.

SEO is about optimising your website to increase the chances of it appearing on relevant search engine results pages (SERPs). It works at every stage of the sales funnel, not just for direct sales/conversions, for example:

Brand awareness and interest stages: for example, when people Google general questions related to how they carry out their job.

"What engineering conferences are taking place in my area this year?"

Interest and consideration: ie, when people are researching the kind of solutions your business provides, and/or comparing prices and packages.

"Product designers and manufacturers."

Consideration and decision stages: ie, when people are familiar with your brand, or have been recommended to them and they're ready to make contact and/or make a purchase.

"DDC Engineering Solutions review."

Research is the foundation of every area of marketing. Here's how we break down the stages for SEO:

#### RESEARCH PHASE

#### Client personas

To develop viable leads, you need clarity about who the stakeholders and decision-makers are - and what motivates them; who in the company would be making the actual purchase (who holds the purse strings) and who would be using it. You can't rely on assumptions.

For the purposes of search and digital marketing, the focus is on offering high quality content in a relevant context to create a rich, personalised experience for your target audience so that they want to find out more. This requires thorough research into your target audience using analytics tools such as Google Analytics, and by studying their online behaviour:

- How and when they use the internet
- The search terms they use
- The way they interact with your content
- Their social media activity

The best way to start this research is by defining your target audience through the creation of client personas for each individual you are hoping to reach and engage with, including job title, characteristics, etc. These personas should be entirely dynamic, open to updates in line with your business' changing priorities, however, it is important for you to have at least sketched an outline to build on.

<u>Understanding Your Digital Audience</u> shows you how to do this in whatever level of detail you need.

Here are some examples:

# Brand CEO of company worth £XXX million



#### Behaviour/characteristics/interests

Strategy, emerging trends, seasonal trends; Reads financial and economic publications and attends industry conferences. Fairly active on LinkedIn

#### Goals

Business growth Keeping shareholders happy

# Challenges & concerns

Competition

Avoiding internal conflict when managing competing brands

#### Needs

Support with management of brand portfolio Access to resources that are affordable, robust, fast

# **Marketing Manager of large business**



#### Behaviour/characteristics/interests

Very active on social media. Reads niche industry publications. Typically on 2nd or 3rd job role

#### Goals

Achieving KPIs

Tasked with ways to enter new markets without investment in bricks & mortar Keeping CEO and clients happy

#### Challenges & concerns

Lack of resources Achieving internal buy-in to marketing strategy

#### Needs

Solutions and support to hit growth and keep clients happy Time, resources and industry expertise

#### **Competitor research**

Analysing your current and potential competitors' SEO activities will allow you to assess your own position in the market, and provide a context in which to make strategic decisions for your business online. Evaluating their strengths and weaknesses against your own will reveal where there are growth opportunities for your own visibility and user experience.

After all, if you want to gain an edge on your competitors, you need to know what they're doing online. The two man considerations are:

- Their strengths: How can you incorporate what they're doing well into your own strategy?
- Their weaknesses: Are you repeating the same mistakes they're making?

It's vital to understand your current position in the online market and it doesn't matter if you are a new brand just starting out or an established market leader; there is always room for improvement.

There's a wealth of analytical information available at your disposal - including tools such as SearchMetrics, Moz's Open Site Explorer and Google Trends - that allows you to track your performance metrics alongside those of your competitors (as well as identify competitors you may not have realised you have!).

This <u>Online Competitor Benchmarking guide</u> contains various way in which to do this and factors which may contribute toward the success of your online strategy, enabling you to:

- Identify areas for improvement and opportunity;
- Determine how other organisations achieve high performance levels; and
- Use this information to improve performance.

#### **Keyword research**

Knowing which keywords to target is pivotal to your organic search visibility and overall digital strategy. A 'keyword' is a word or phrase that is used as a search query by searchers in order to find answers to questions, find goods or services or address any other search requirement. You need to carry out research to identify the phrases and topics to target to create high quality content that meets your target clients' needs.

As well as helping your site to rank, thorough keyword research will give you a much greater insight into what your customers want. This will allow you to increase your visibility, improve the relevance of your traffic, reduce irrelevant traffic or leads, and enhance user experience.

Google Keyword Planner Tool and Google Trends can help you to quantify search volume and identify which of these should be the focus of your efforts. Ideally you're looking for the golden ratio of low competition and high volume. The focus should be on quality as well as quantity: effective keyword research requires an understanding of a searcher's intent so that you can produce on-page content that resonates with them and makes them want to find out more.

People search for a variety of reasons. Common reasons in the B2B sector include searching to:

- Understand a product category
- Learn about a product or solution
- Solve a specific business problem
- Be informed about new approaches

The <u>Keyword Research Workbook</u> shows you, step-by-step, how to build your keyword list - with practical exercises to get you started.

#### **ON-PAGE OPTIMISATION**

Your website needs to be built on a technically-sound foundation. Well-executed technical on-page SEO helps both search engines and human users to find and read your website, improving search rankings and user experience (UX).

It includes aspects such as:

- URL best practice: Start with the basics.
- Site structure: Vital to user experience and crawler indexing.
- Site speed: An important factor for ranking and minimising bounce.
- Mobile optimisation: More people are now searching using mobile devices to search than PCs.
- HTML: Meta, header & image tags, links and semantic markup.
- Canonicalisation: Are visitors and search engines seeing what you want them to?

Technical on-page optimisation can be one of the more difficult aspects of search marketing to learn; use the <u>Technical On-page SEO Checklist</u> to introduce yourself to the basics. If you've already got some knowledge or experience of technical SEO, the more in depth eBook <u>SEO Uncovered: Technical On-page SEO</u> will allow you to dive a little deeper.

#### ON-PAGE CONTENT

Once you've carried out your keyword research (which should be an ongoing activity) and developed your personas, you can focus on what content your audience wants to read, learn or see, particularly on your: landing pages, category/product pages, blog posts, or FAQs pages.

Good B2B content focuses on solutions that address customers' needs and help them achieve a positive business outcome. It will also be rewarded by Google in its search results, as the search engine's algorithms are advanced enough to recognise high quality content: that which is unique, substantial, engaging and relevant.

But what type of content resonates the most with a B2B audience?

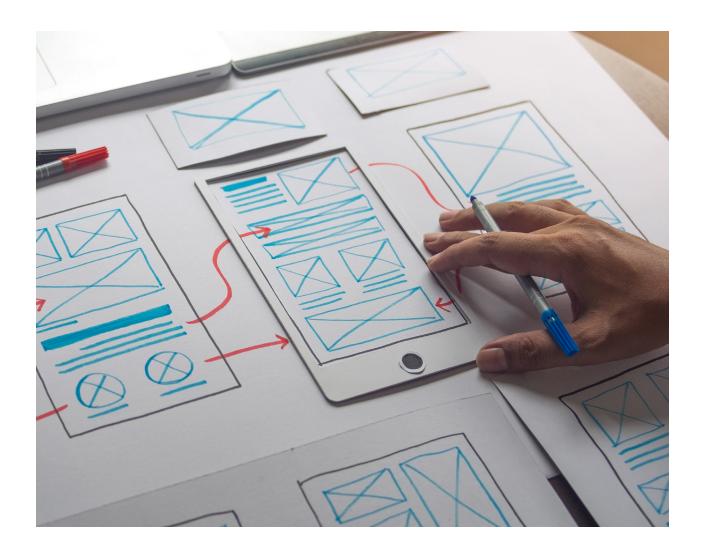
Forrester Research carried out an extensive study to find out the <u>key things that B2B prospects</u> <u>look for</u> on potential suppliers' websites:

- Customer/peer examples. Business buyers want content featuring your customers their peers who share experiences, pain points, and success stories. According to Forrester, B2B buyers say industry or peer case studies, testimonials and reviews are the most valuable type of content when exploring and making buying decisions. Remember that B2B buyers can be more risk averse than those in the B2C sector as they have to take accountability for their spending decisions!
- Content from credible sources. Business leaders told researchers they rely most on content developed by industry analysts/experts when making technology buying decisions. At the very least, ensure your content is proofread and fact-checked.
- Short content. Buyers prefer content that is concise, with shorter formats capturing two out of the top three spots for content types that buyers prefer to interact with.
- Easy-to-consume content. B2B buyers don't have time to browse through swathes of poorly targeted content. Visuals, such as diagrams, infographics and video can get your message across quickly and effectively, eg, on landing pages and product pages. However, longer-form content going into more detail should be available on your website for visitors who want to find out more, for example, short-form content can link back to more substantial service pages, blog posts and FAQs.

# They don't want:

• **Product features.** It's an old analogy but, when you're looking to generate leads, buyers want to know, for example, how they can save time and impress the board with clear sales reports, rather than your software's wide spectrum of functionality, special characteristics, and other descriptive qualities. Save that for further down the sales funnel.

Want more in-depth advice on developing your website content? This <u>cheat sheet</u> shows you the top 12 ways to create content that engages your visitors - and improves your chances of Google showing you pages in its search results.



#### OFF-PAGE DIGITAL MARKETING

Your off-page digital marketing activity (ie, that which appears on third party websites, such as online industry publications and social media) is incredibly important to:

- Showcase your brand in relevant places, where your audience is likely to see it.
- Demonstrate credibility especially when your brand and website are cited on websites with high perceived reputation.
- Build genuine, organic inbound links from influential and trustworthy sources (ie, those which Google interprets to high 'authority'): another important SEO factor.

Using content marketing, influencer outreach and social amplification can differentiate your B2B brand, improve your search engine ranking and make stronger connections.

#### CONTENT MARKETING

Not only the preserve of B2C, content is a powerful medium of engagement and persuasion. But in B2B informing buyers, and the wider business community, is the focus rather than entertaining. It's about starting a conversation, with both empathy and credibility.

Examples of assets you could produce include eBooks, whitepapers (industry research and thought leadership are particularly appealing to a business audience), infographics, video, animated visuals and more, that are relevant and engaging.

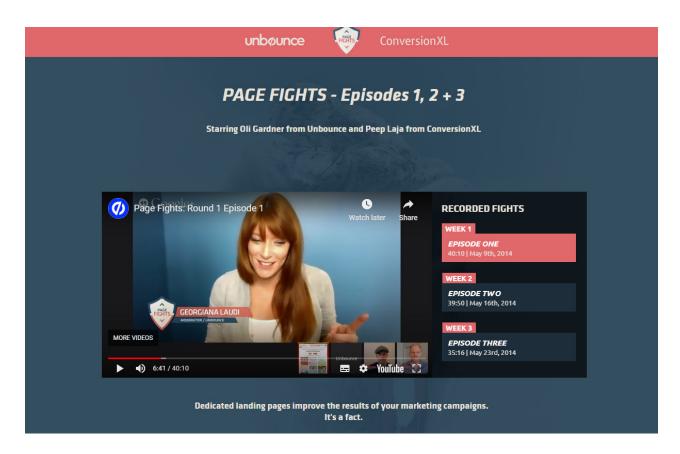
Your B2B audience, as individuals, 'consume' content, and, like B2C customers, are looking for ways to 'solve problems' but their expectations about the type of value it will deliver is fundamentally different because the customer/buying journey is different (and more complicated).

91% percent of B2B marketers are doing content marketing, according to the Content Marketing Institute. However, they also found there are still issues with strategic planning and bringing in leads - and only 30% of B2B marketers say their organisations are using content marketing to its full potential.

It is key to delivering superior customer experience, through the right content, at the right time. Content marketing is not advertising, or 'hard sell'; it needs to add real value to your audience.

A B2B company doing unique off-site content marketing well is Unbounce, a landing page software company based in Vancouver. Building on its successful blog, the company recognised that it could leverage their expertise beyond the written word to create a video microsite, Page Fights.

The project came to a close after one year, but during its existence, Page Fights contained live streams of marketing optimisation expert panels who critiqued landing pages in real time. Not only is the visual, 'snackable' format highly engaging, but its irreverent - often controversial - style allowed the brand's personality to shine through and added an appealing 'human' element in a B2B space that's often dominated by dry, formal content. Again, remember that B2B consumers are individuals with a sense of humour too.



#### **OUTREACH & PR**

Outreach is about maximising the amplification of your content marketing efforts through:

- Building relationships with 'influencers' bloggers and websites that operate in your niche by encouraging them to participate with and share content that will appeal to their readership.
- Creating newsworthy press releases that resonate with journalists.
- Establishing yourself as an industry thought leader/authority and a source of great content.
- Earning high-quality links to your site through useful and remarkable content in the process.

Our <u>B2B Content Marketing Boxset</u> contains seven great resources to help you use content marketing, influencer outreach and social amplification to differentiate your B2B brand, improve your search engine ranking and make stronger connections.

# **SOCIAL MEDIA**

LinkedIn is the social platform of choice for generating B2B leads, allowing you to get in front of decision-makers, influencers, and other professionals. With over 500 million users, it is a fantastic platform to pick up tips from industry experts, establish your own expertise and widen your professional network.

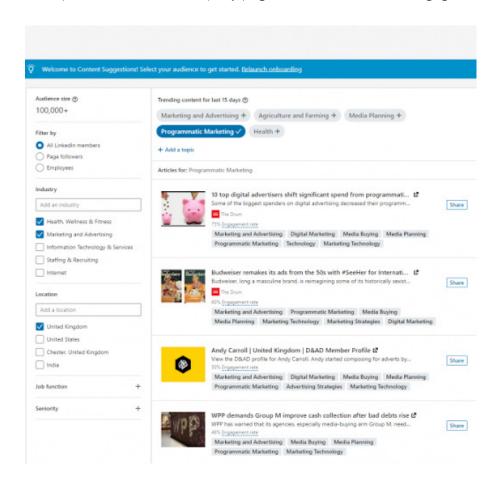
Once seen by many as the somewhat poorer relation to hipper cousins Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, over recent years professional networking platform LinkedIn has taken strides to become more attractive to marketers and advertisers.

As well as focusing on encouraging more authentic interaction and engagement, LinkedIn has developed a more data-driven approach to the content it surfaces for members and suggestions it makes for people, companies and hashtags to follow, Groups to join etc.

Here are some of our tips to increase your visibility and make the most of LinkedIn's features:

#### Focus on quality content

LinkedIn has focused on inspiring members to put more thought into the content they post, rather than simply blasting out sales messages. Its content suggestion feature surfaces topics and content that are trending within a business' industry and target audience. This feature recommends specific articles for company pages to share and better engage with their followers.



#### Improve your interaction in Groups

The increasing emphasis on sharing meaningful content and stimulating genuine conversations has had a particular impact on the way Groups operate. Once it was possible to share to multiple Groups from a blog post or webpage with little or no context, but this scattergun approach has been removed, encouraging members to make a deliberate effort to visit the Group's page and engage in more authentic conversations with other members.

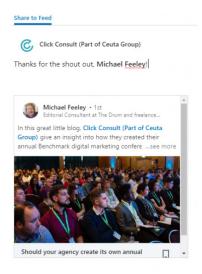
It's also possible to allow those outside your connection network to 'follow' you as a member rather send you a connection request; this means they are more likely to see your content in their feed and join your conversation, making it easy to establish a relationship and share your insights with people who are interested in what you have to say.

<u>Creating your own Group</u> is simple (although requires time to regularly manage) and gives you an additional platform to engage in meaningful conversations with those in your industry.

#### **Enhance your posts**

Post videos (which automatically play in your audience's feed), and tag both individuals and organisations in posts, is a good way to give recognition, notify them of something that may be of interest or encourage them to respond in some way.

If you're a company page admin, you can reshare their employees' public LinkedIn posts from their page, and to respond to and reshare any posts on LinkedIn where a company's Page is mentioned, like customer testimonials and product reviews. This lets companies showcase conversations that people are having about them, and can help their brand stand out above the crowd, while facilitating employee advocacy (research shows that employees' social posts can generate up to 8x more engagement than the same information when posted by their employers.



But, as we've emphasised throughout this eBook, B2B does have to be boring and uncreative. LinkedIn advertising agency Seed to Branch regularly publishes fun, empathetic - and often interactive - content that's still appropriate for their target clients: businesses looking to catch the eye of their audience on this social media platform. They all use their own hashtag - #studio888 - to highlight their regularly-posted spoof recreations of movies.

They also do a great job of tagging in relevant individuals and companies, and also sharing the work, to increase reach and engagement. Here are some examples:





### Our Marketer's Guide to LinkedIn covers:

- Optimising your member profile
- Navigating LinkedIn
- Marketing your business with company pages
- Smart searching
- Analysing your results
- Advertising options on LinkedIn
- Employer tools
- Premium accounts
- LinkedIn's publishing platform

#### Download it here.

#### **EMAIL MARKETING**

Email marketing is one of the most cost effective marketing tools. According to the Direct Marketing Association, email marketing on average sees a 4300% ROI for businesses.

Campaigns can be centred around a monthly newsletter, notifying people about promotions, or even abandoned basket follow up emails.

As well as maximising the reach of your content and amplifying your brand's message, it is easy to manage, gives you full control, and allows you to establish a direct contact with your online audience.

The beauty of an email marketing campaign is that you can communicate a vast amount of information, in bulk, to a targeted audience in an instant. You can use them to share a variety of resources, information, messages, images and links.

#### Other benefits include:

- Pre-engagement: Emails are one of the few forms of marketing that users choose to receive. By opting into or registering their interest on your website, they have often asked you to directly contact them about future products, services or to offer the latest news. This level of engagement with your audience often leads to higher rates of engagement and conversion.
- A word of warning: unsolicited emails can not only appear 'spammy', but could also lead to a fine under the privacy law, GDPR.
- Segmentation and targeting: Marketing automation platforms, such as Act-on, Pardot and Hubspot, allow you to easily segment your marketing list and create email campaigns that are tailored to, for example, those who have previously engaged, shown an interest in a particular product or topic, with a specific job function or who have met other criteria.
- Tracking: You can conduct your own in-house tests to find out the headlines that are encouraging a higher open rate, the links that are being clicked and the calls to action that are resonating with a particular contact list.
- Lead scoring: Email marketing campaigns linked to analytics and automation platforms use 'lead scoring' a points based system that allows you to generate a funnel tailored to your brand's overall sales and marketing objectives, where you assign unique values to each element of your campaign, such as email click-throughs and website visits. This helps to paint an overall picture of how your audience interacts with your brand, enabling leads to be managed more effectively.

Marketing automation provider Hubspot's newsletter, giving recipients access to exclusive, relevant content (including a 'behind the scenes' article), with a compelling subject line, and it well-laid out and easy to read:



# What makes a good lead gen email?

- **Personalised:** This boosts click through rates, turn readers into website visitors, and then become leads.
- Visually appealing: In terms of overall design, layout, branding etc. You should also ensure it displays correctly for the different email providers recipients may be using.
- Incentivised: Think how quickly your own inbox fills up with businesses vying or your attention. Offer them something to encourage them to open, such as a gift or a downloadable asset and they will be more likely to respond.
- Well-timed: Make sure that your emails hit your audience's inbox at the peak of their likeliness to engage. Learn from previous open rates to target certain times, days and months.
- Integrated: Your strategy should convey the same message as, and complement, all the other elements of your marketing strategy.
- Copy: Consider all aspects of the language, from subject line through to your call to action. The latter should give a compelling reason to click through to your website. Don't just take your customers to your home page; show them exactly where you want them to go and make it quick and easy to complete transactions, forms and sales.

#### **PAID MEDIA**

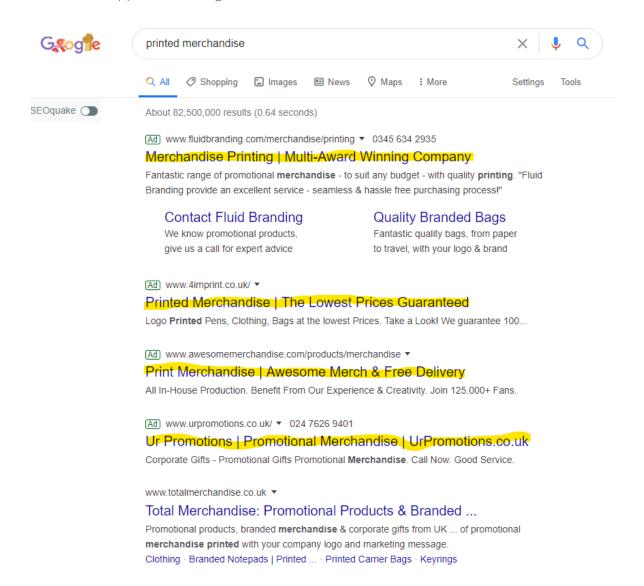
#### **GOOGLE ADS**

Paid search can be a win-win for you and for your potential customers; you drive highly targeted traffic to your website, while they get to see ads that are relevant to their searches.

Paid search also gives you greater control over your presence on SERPs than a reliance on organic search results alone. In fact, spend on paid search overtook that of traditional SEO back in 2017, according to Forrester Research.

As Google's algorithm continues to develop, sustained organic traction takes more effort to achieve, making paid search a good option for immediate results (although, in the long run, most businesses find that using a combination of both paid and organic search techniques is the most effective strategy).

Paid search ads appear above organic results:



# *Is paid search right for my business?*

This depends on what you want to achieve - so you'll need to begin by defining your goals. Once you are clear about what you want to get out of a campaign, you can then begin researching keywords, estimating cost and return and setting KPIs (key performance indicators).

Paid search can help businesses achieve a variety of goals, as set out in more detail below. However, it's not all about getting people to click on your ad – if you want a respectable conversion rate, you also need to put careful thought into what they see when they arrive on your landing page.

# Lead generation

Your ads will appear when people are actively searching for the products and services your business offers. You need to ensure you send searchers to a landing page containing content that is specific to their search and includes a clear call-to-action such as a call-back request form, email subscription form, and/or a downloadable brochure.

How will you measure performance?

Your target may be to generate 100 leads at a CPA (cost per acquisition) of £10 per lead. You can set a CPA target in Google Ads directly.

#### Remarketing

Your ads are shown to a group of people that have already engaged with your site, this is known as <u>remarketing</u>. Whether those who have performed a specific action (downloaded a resource), completed an eCommerce transaction or abandoned a basket. Your ad will remind them of incomplete purchases, of complementary products or services.

Success in this instance could be an increase in recurring revenue, or average lifetime value of users – or simply treated in the same way as a lead or revenue generation campaign.

Our <u>Simple Guide to Paid Search (PPC) eBook</u> covers: how to get the most from your budget, using keywords effectively; writing high-quality ads and landing pages; plus essential tips for managing your account.

#### PAID SOCIAL ON LINKEDIN

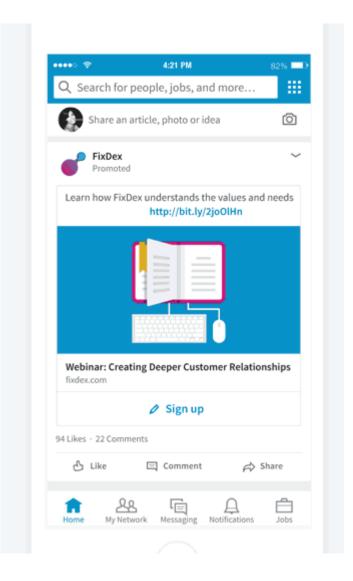
What really sets LinkedIn apart from other social media advertising platforms is its optimised targeting options, driven by the quality and detail of the personal and professional data members share in their profiles.

Want to focus on professionals in a certain sector who are interested in technology and based in a certain location? Reach CEOs of businesses with more than 1,000 employees who might need your services? You can really hone in and connect with specific professionals who you've earmarked as potential leads using this platform.

To give you taster of LinkedIn advertising here are our top tips:

- Make sure your buyer personas are well-defined before you start. This will help you deliver the right messaging to a specific subset of LinkedIn members.
- Combine the Job Function option with the Seniority option to reach decision makers with a specific expertise. For example, if you're looking to reach decision-makers in the IT function, try targeting the Information Technology, Engineering, and Operations functions and pairing that with a seniority targeting of Senior, Manager, Director, VP, CXO, and Owner.
- Avoid limiting your reach by targeting only a few titles. When you begin entering a title in the
  tool, Campaign Manager will auto-suggest other relevant job titles that you may want to add.
  You can also broaden the scale of your campaign by targeting both current and past holders of
  a given Job Title. These members may have changed roles but still have relevant skillsets and
  be of interest to your business.
- Company Size is one of the options where excluding options works well if your business caters to businesses in a specific stage of growth.
- Before selecting Industry targeting, look at LinkedIn Pages from a few companies that fit your
  options to see which industry they fall under. Consider including all relevant industries in your
  targeting.
- Lookalike audiences let you target ads to people who are similar to your existing customers, website visitors and target accounts and new predefined audience templates.
- Before selecting the Groups option, to some research on LinkedIn homepage to find relevant Groups. The larger and more active groups will typically appear at the top of the list.
- Don't over-target as it could limit the scale of your campaigns and reduce performance.

An example of a lead gen ad on LinkedIn:



Find out more by downloading <u>A Marketer's Guide to LinkedIn Advertising.</u>

# CONCLUSION

Traditionally, B2B marketers have much less visibility into purchasing decisions than consumer marketers, who sometimes have hundreds, even thousands, of data points for an individual consumer.

But, in this data-driven era, search and digital marketing makes it easier and more cost effective to achieve tailored campaigns, targeting core decision-makers.

Articulation is moving away from messages that seek to hard-sell to faceless corporations, to ones that resonate with people.

# **GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY**

#### **ABOUT US**

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named SEO Agency of the Year 2019, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

# YOUR BESPOKE ORGANIC SEARCH (SEO) ANALYSIS **AND REVIEW**

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OUR BESPOKE ORGANI

SEARCH (SEO) ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

# **OUR AWARDS**









# **OUR TECHNOLOGIES**

monitor TRAX\* rank TRAX\* feed TRAX\* link TRAX\* pro TRAX\* page TRAX