# How LinkedIn revolutionized the prospecting game

## 11 tips to turn your LinkedIn page into your best prospecting tool

Most financial professionals would definitely smile if they never had to make another cold call for the rest of their career. The good news is: Traditional cold calling is basically dead. The days of smiling and dialing are over.

### What prompted this change? Social media – especially LinkedIn.

Today, LinkedIn has more users than ever. It's a target-rich environment – helping you start relevant conversations to build trust and find new prospects.

How? By using LinkedIn to learn about your prospect before you make a call – so you can demonstrate that you know something about them and can contribute value to the conversation.

- Has the prospect changed jobs recently?
- Is there a new product or new initiative at your prospect's company?
- Has your prospect been featured in an online article or posted an interesting blog?

### Why cold call when friends will make introductions for you?

One of the most powerful advantages of LinkedIn is the "connections" feature. Once you're a member of LinkedIn, you connect with other friends and business professionals.

From there, you can see colleagues of your connections. These are called "second-degree connections" on LinkedIn.

Looking at second-degree connections makes it easy to find out if one of your friends or business contacts is already connected to a prospective client.

### When used correctly, these second-degree connections can be a powerful tool.

Instead of contacting the prospect yourself, you can ask your current connection to introduce you to the prospect.

You've now gone from the position of being a random financial professional looking for new business to being a trusted professional who is recommended by that contact.

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# 11 tips to step up your LinkedIn prospecting

Successfully leveraging the power of LinkedIn to fuel your firm's prospecting can be easy. But it's more than simply opening a LinkedIn profile and waiting for prospects to find you. Here are 11 easy-to-implement ideas to help you stand out and make the most of this prospecting tool.

1. **Make sure your profile is complete.**
   That means 100%. LinkedIn automatically includes handy tools to help guide you to building a full profile.

2. **Use a good, professional-looking profile picture – but choose one that stands out.**
   If most of your network uses color profile pictures, consider using one that's black and white. Choose a friendly, relaxed pose rather than the standard headshot.

3. **Incorporate key words into your profile.**
   If one of your specialties is retirement planning, weave that phrase into your title, job summaries, and profile headlines. Your title, for instance, doesn't only have to consist of your official work title. Include a description to help tell people why you're different from all of the other sales managers, vice presidents, or financial professionals on LinkedIn. Think of it as a short elevator speech – for online viewers.

4. **When you invite people to become your connection, do NOT simply use the default invite.**
   Take the time to include WHY you are reaching out to the person – you formerly worked together, you recently met at an event, you both coach teams within the local sports club – and offer value so the prospect has a reason to accept your connection.

5. **Connect to your clients.**
   Knowing your clients and getting to know the things happening with them can help point you to the kinds of prospects who may be exceptional clients as well.

6. **Look at your clients' connections and ask your clients to introduce you to selected prospects.**
   If you and a client both volunteer for a local organization and you see the client has an interesting connection who also volunteers for that organization, ask your client if they would be willing to introduce you. These types of connections can be invaluable ways to build your circle of contacts.

7. **Before talking to a prospect, go on LinkedIn to find common interests.**
   It can be new developments at their company, a sport you have in common, or the perspectives from common trade groups.

8. **When emailing a new contact, first send the email and then connect on LinkedIn.**
   This is an easy way to make connections with new people. When replying to their email, be sure to mention that you're going to reach out on LinkedIn as well. Then when you request the LinkedIn connection, reference the email you just sent. This helps solidify the relationship and gives the prospect a good reason to accept your invitation.

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9 **Search companies and follow those where you'd like to have more clients or prospects.**

Following companies helps keep you up-to-date on their corporate news that may be important in your community. This information can serve as helpful conversation starters when you reach out to current and prospective clients within the company's employee base.

10 **Participate in groups.**

But don't focus exclusively on industry groups. Active participation in terms of commenting or adding value to a group can help you be seen as a leader. But if you're mainly talking to financial professionals in your local area, for instance, you're most likely preaching to the choir – not building an expanding prospect base.

11 **Keep your profile fresh.**

Post videos or slideshows to show prospects how your team tackled a certain challenge. Link to helpful articles. Your LinkedIn profile is more than just an online resume. Periodically adding new information can help bring contacts and prospects back to your profile.

As always, check with your back office on your firm's social media policy and only use approved materials.

## BONUS: 3 ideas the pros use to make the most of LinkedIn

1. **Connect with contacts you meet at events through LinkedIn.**

   Connecting to new contacts by email and then LinkedIn can help you maximize your event experience – while smartly building your prospecting circle. Remind them of something you discussed or a seminar you both saw. REMEMBER: Don't just use the standard LinkedIn connection invite.

   WANT HELP STREAMLINING THIS? Cell phone apps can take a picture of a prospect's business card, then send an invitation to connect on LinkedIn. It can be a great way to save time after a long day at an event.

2. **Make your profile headline a value proposition.**

   Don't just use your title. Try to answer who you help and how you help them.

3. **Use LinkedIn as your own personal database with LinkedIn Sales Navigator.**

   The basic version of LinkedIn includes low-level search capabilities and shows contacts only out to the second degree. Programs like LinkedIn Sales Navigator are like putting LinkedIn on steroids. You can run focused searches to specifically target certain types of leads. You can set up parameters for the type of person you're specifically interested in meeting. Then the program notifies you when it finds those people. Plus, you can unlock the profiles of people outside your network – giving you wide-ranging access to more prospecting opportunities.

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