

# Unlocking LinkedIn Ads

Insider Tips and Agency Secrets  
for Effective B2B Targeting

# Best Practices Meets Real-World Advice

LinkedIn Ads is well-established as an important platform for B2B marketing, but are you truly unlocking its full potential to drive your business forward? Yes, it has powerful targeting tools, but without the right insights, you might miss critical elements that could elevate your campaign performance.

Keeping up with LinkedIn best practices and experimenting with strategies can be time-consuming and costly. **At D2 Creative, we've done the legwork, combining our successful client experiences with LinkedIn's own recommendations.** Throughout this document, we'll share LinkedIn's official recommendations, provide our expert insights, and offer actionable tips to help you maximize the effectiveness of your LinkedIn marketing efforts. By following these enhanced guidelines, you'll be better equipped to create precise, high-performing campaigns that resonate with your target audience.

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# What LinkedIn vs. Marketers Say About B2B Targeting

With a community of over 1 billion members worldwide<sup>1</sup>, LinkedIn is undoubtedly the largest and most diverse professional ecosystem online. More than 50% of decision-makers say they turn to LinkedIn for insights and thought leadership<sup>2</sup>. While the potential of LinkedIn is evident, effectively identifying and targeting the right audience on such a vast platform can be challenging.

B2B marketing thrives on precision and focus, yet some of LinkedIn's recommendations suggest a broad approach. For instance, LinkedIn advises targeting audiences of over 50,000 for Sponsored Content and Text Ads, and over 15,000 for Message Ads. However, these guidelines are meant for the initial phase of a campaign<sup>3</sup>. You should actively review and adjust strategies based on performance after launch.

While larger audiences are suitable for maximizing visibility, more selective targeting can drive better results for conversion-driven campaigns. Leveraging LinkedIn's robust targeting options from the outset can enhance the effectiveness of your marketing efforts.

## Reach Professional Audiences on LinkedIn Ads Using These Targeting Options:

### Job Experience

Job Functions, Job Seniority, Job Titles, Member Skills, and Years of Experience

### Interests and Traits

Member Interests, Member Groups, and Member Traits

### Company

Company Name, Company Industry, Company Followers, Company Growth Rate, and Company Size

### Demographics

Age and Gender

### Education

Degrees, Fields of Study, and Member Schools

### Geography

Recent and/or Permanent Location

### Matched Audiences

Reach people you already know with website, contact, and account targeting

## Audience Size

### LinkedIn's Recommendation

Your audience should include at least 50,000+ for Sponsored Content and Text Ads and 15,000+ for Message Ads.

### Our Insight

While a broad audience can increase initial visibility, it's crucial to continuously refine and optimize your audience based on campaign performance. A large audience is great for brand awareness, but more specific targeting can yield better results for conversion-focused campaigns.

### Actionable Tip

Despite the size of your audience at launch, you should be monitoring performance closely as the campaign runs. Reference the Demographics report in LinkedIn Ads early and often to identify low- and high-performing segments, then adjust your audience accordingly to narrow targeting.

# LinkedIn Ads Doesn't Know Your Audience – You Do

Determining who will be the most responsive to your ads requires a proactive approach. LinkedIn's robust targeting tools are powerful, but their true potential is unlocked only when you have a clear understanding of your target audience. To make the most of your LinkedIn campaigns, you need to do the groundwork—researching, segmenting, and defining your ideal customer profiles. This foundational effort ensures that your ads not only reach a broad audience but also connect with the right individuals who are most likely to engage with your content and drive results.

In our experience, the process of developing the ideal audience for a LinkedIn campaign is as follows:

## Identifying Your Audience

It can be a challenge to quantify your audience. We recommend beginning the process by determining the broad characteristics of your Ideal **Customer Profile (ICP)**. You may already have a “perfect match” brand user in mind, but taking the time to lay out the details will make everything that comes after easier. For this, focus on general information like demographics, location, and the industry and size of the company where your ideal target works.

This is also a good time to consider how the balance between your budget and campaign goals will affect how you approach your targeting strategy. At \$5.58<sup>4</sup>, the average cost per click (CPC) on LinkedIn is notably higher than other platforms, so balancing your budget with your goals is paramount to getting the most bang for your buck.

Your ad format and campaign objective will also significantly affect your bottom line, as LinkedIn optimizes your campaign based on your settings. For instance, an awareness campaign might save costs by focusing on the broadest attributes of your ICP. However, if your ultimate goal is leads, LinkedIn won't know that if your settings and content all support optimizing for impressions and reach. Selecting the best campaign objective and ad format can help to maximize cost-effectiveness, allowing you to use your budget smarter and target more precise characteristics to drive lead generation.

## Building Audiences with Your Data

### LinkedIn's Recommendation

To create a Matched Audience, upload a CSV file of your email contact lists to target to (or exclude) in your campaigns, or upload a CSV of target companies to run account-based marketing campaigns. It is recommended that contact lists contain at least 10,000 personal email addresses, as it must match a minimum of 300 members to serve, and that company lists include at least 1,000 companies.

### Our Insight

While you can use your data to retarget customers or run ABM campaigns, you can also add a Matched Audience as an audience exclusion to ensure you're only serving ads to new prospects.

### Actionable Tip

Matched Audiences from lists can have a higher cost per mille (CPM) and higher cost per result. When first running a campaign to a Matched Audience, A/B test it against a built audience to determine its quality before putting all of spend behind it.

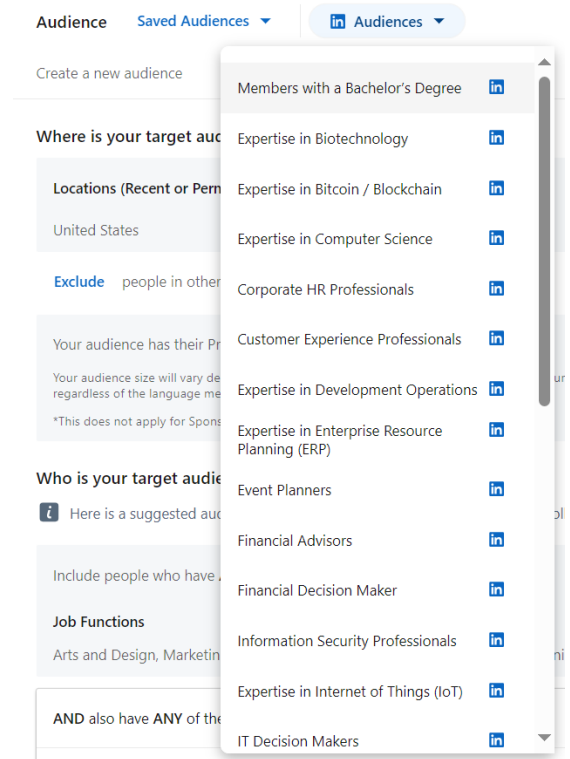
# Layer Your Targeting Criteria with LinkedIn's

LinkedIn Ads' targeting is unique because members are incentivized to keep their profiles accurate and up-to-date for networking, personal branding, and job opportunities. Other social platforms aren't as privy to this information and therefore targeting by it is not possible. With your audience needs defined, these insights become a powerful resource for setting a target that best fits your business and your objectives.

Once you're in the campaign builder itself, you can start aligning LinkedIn's audience attributes, such as company, job experience, and professional skills and interests with the characteristics of your ICP. Doing so lets you directly use your ICP to hone in on the LinkedIn-specific criteria on which you should be focused. If you don't want to start from scratch, LinkedIn offers pre-built audiences to jumpstart the process.

LinkedIn's guidelines make a good general recommendation, but they're based on the average campaign, not *your* campaign.

You've already put in the work to paint a more exact picture of your target, so as long as you're sticking to your goals, budget, and ICP you should trust it. After all, there will be opportunities to adjust, if needed.



LinkedIn offers pre-built audiences to jumpstart your campaigns. Insights derived from your team and data can be used to refine these audiences further.

## Avoid The “And/Or” Pitfall

A common mistake we see is using too many “or” attributes and not enough “and.” Consider the following audience examples:

### Audience A

Include people who have **ANY** of the following attributes:

#### Member Groups

- B2B Marketing
- LinkedIn Advertisers Group

**OR**

#### Member Skills

- B2B Marketing
- B2B Marketing Strategy
- LinkedIn Advertising

**AND** also have **ANY** of the following attributes:

#### Job Seniorities

- Director
- Senior
- Manager

**AND** also have **ANY** of the following attributes:

#### Job Functions

- Marketing

### Audience B

Include people who have **ANY** of the following attributes:

#### Member Groups

- B2B Marketing
- LinkedIn Advertisers Group

**OR**

#### Member Skills

- B2B Marketing
- B2B Marketing Strategy
- LinkedIn Advertising

**OR**

#### Job Seniorities

- Director
- Senior
- Manager

**OR**

#### Job Functions

- Marketing

If you were looking to target other B2B LinkedIn marketers, Audience A would likely result in higher engagement and conversion rates. The combination of member groups, skills, job seniorities, and job functions ensures that the audience is highly relevant and targeted. While it may result in a smaller audience, the individuals included are more likely to be interested in and responsive to your content. Because individuals only need to meet one of the criteria, Audience B will include a broader range of people who may not be as relevant. This can lead to lower engagement rates and higher costs per conversion.

## Monitor with Vigilance and Optimize Regularly

Once you've set up the audience for your campaign, resist the urge to consider it "final" and move on. The strategic move is to think of your audience at launch as a starting point. LinkedIn's reporting will provide you a wealth of analytics and data as your campaign runs, such as the companies, job titles, seniority, companies size, etc. of those interacting with your ads.

Performance **Demographics**

Display: Company size Time range: 5/16/2024 - 6/14/2024

Attributes below reporting minimum will not be reported to protect user privacy.

Name	Impressions	Clicks	Average CTR
10001+ employees	34,212 (22.79%)	70 (19.66%)	0.2%
1001-5000 employees	20,280 (13.51%)	40 (11.24%)	0.2%
5001-10000 employees	11,390 (7.59%)	30 (8.43%)	0.26%
2-10 employees	11,041 (7.35%)	27 (7.58%)	0.24%
11-50 employees	10,255 (6.83%)	31 (8.71%)	0.3%
51-200 employees	8,129 (5.41%)	18 (5.06%)	0.22%
201-500 employees	7,413 (4.94%)	24 (6.74%)	0.32%
501-1000 employees	6,474 (4.31%)	8 (2.25%)	0.12%
1 employee	776 (0.52%)	Below reporting minimum	-

[View the Demographics report in LinkedIn Ads for one/multiple campaign groups, campaigns, or ads to get more information about who is seeing and engaging with your content.](#)

This data will ideally reflect your target audience, but it may reveal who is seeing your ad that shouldn't be, allowing you to modify your audience by adding attributes to exclude. You may also wish to expand your audience to increase impressions and counter ad fatigue. By making these regular enhancements a priority, you'll be able to better identify audience segments with proven potential and capitalize on them more efficiently.

If you already have a sizeable organic LinkedIn following, reference the professions, titles, and interests of the people interacting with your content to see if they make sense to target or exclude within your campaign.

# Enhancing Your Campaigns Even Further

There's more to targeting than just determining your audience. If anything, that's just the first step. If you want to truly optimize your LinkedIn marketing efforts, you need to apply the same critical thinking in targeting once your ads are already running. Getting this part right is arguably harder than the initial targeting, and most of the time will be a process that never truly ends until the campaign does.

## Segment Your Messaging

A one-size-fits-all approach is rarely the most optimal one on LinkedIn – it's crucial to segment your messaging effectively. Even if you have one main ICP you're targeting, it isn't as homogenous as you might think. A manager and an executive, even if they work for the same company, have different drivers and would respond best to tailored content.

Each campaign can only target one audience and use one ad format, so strategic planning is essential. Here are a few ways to structure your campaign groups, campaigns, and ads for optimal performance:

### Use Campaign Groups with Budget Optimization

Create a campaign group and allocate a group budget. LinkedIn will automatically distribute the budget across the best-performing campaigns within the group. Creating multiple campaigns under this group will allow you to experiment with various messages and ad formats. LinkedIn will dynamically allocate budget to the top performers, ensuring cost-effective spending.

### Run A/B Tests for Precise Insights

If you're torn between just two variables, use LinkedIn's A/B testing to compare performance. Both campaigns in the test will share the same settings except for a selected variable—ad format or content, audience, or placement. This method allows you to pinpoint which specific element is driving success, providing clear, actionable insights.

### Test Multiple Ad Creatives within a Single Campaign

For a single audience but varied messages, create one campaign and upload different ad creatives. This allows you to see how each message performs within the same campaign context. LinkedIn's data suggests that having up to five ads in a campaign can lead to a +20% or greater improvement in click-through rates (CTR) compared to a single ad<sup>5</sup>.

## Retain and Refine with Retargeting

Not everyone who interacts with an ad will convert. Still, just by engaging they've given you a major opportunity to refine your strategy via retargeting.

LinkedIn's retargeting capabilities allow you to tailor ads based on previous interactions, making it easy to re-engage a lost lead and guide them back toward conversion. This process helps keep your brand top-of-mind and increases the chances of turning initial interest into a completed action. Even if retargeting doesn't always result in a captured lead, it offers crucial insights into your messaging effectiveness. Persistent underperformance in retargeting attempts can signal that your current approach isn't resonating with this segment. This feedback is invaluable, as it prompts you to adjust your strategy or reassess your target audience to ensure your efforts are aligned with the right prospects.

## Mastering LinkedIn Ads for B2B Marketing

There's no denying the benefits that businesses can gain from tapping into LinkedIn's network of professionals and businesses, but fully realizing them takes a deep understanding of both how the platform works, and how to get what you need out of it. Finding the right strategy can be a process, but by balancing LinkedIn's best practices with experienced-based strategies, it doesn't have to be a difficult one. We hope that this resource has equipped you with the knowledge and insights to better optimize both your target audience and how you reach them.

While many of the targeting strategies discussed may be familiar, adapting them to fit LinkedIn requires nuance and experience.

This is why many marketers opt to enlist the help of LinkedIn Ads experts, like D2 Creative, when trying out new campaigns or strategies or to optimize existing campaigns. An extra pair of eyes can help you identify opportunities you might not initially consider, enabling more effective advertising that progresses from planning to production faster.

**LinkedIn offers a powerful platform for B2B marketing, but success depends on a well-crafted strategy that leverages its unique capabilities. By applying the insights and best practices shared in this white paper, you can enhance your LinkedIn campaigns, connect more effectively with your target audience, and ultimately drive better results for your business.**

## Retargeting

### LinkedIn's Recommendation

Add LinkedIn's Insight to your site to create a retargeting pixel and enhance your paid ad campaigns. It is commonly stated that businesses should start retargeting once they've reached between 500-1,000 monthly visitors, however this is subjective.

### Our Insight

Your website is only one source of retargeting data – try building a Matched Audience of users that have engaged with your ad content so that you can serve highly tailored follow-up ads.

### Actionable Tip

In Campaign Builder, look for retargeting Matched Audiences under Audiences > Retargeting. Add Matched Audiences as an audience attribute to include them as part of a bigger audience, use them as an exclusion, add attributes to narrow your retargeting audience, or target them on their own.

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