



How to Use LinkedIn to Find International Exhibitor Prospects

By Michelle Bruno

As of December 31, 2012, LinkedIn, the largest professional social network on the Internet, reported they have over 200 million members in 200 countries and territories. Members are signing up to use LinkedIn at a rate of two members per second and 64 percent of members are located outside the United States. For exhibition owners and their overseas sales agents, LinkedIn represents a tremendous opportunity to connect with potential international exhibitors for their domestic shows.

LinkedIn Profiles: Personal, Company, Products

LinkedIn revolves primarily around personal profiles and secondarily around company profiles (pages). The first step for exhibition organizers interested in using LinkedIn to prospect is to create both types of profiles, rich in keywords, so that prospects can find them. One reason to use LinkedIn (instead of Google) for these types of searches is that the search results are more refined and they come with a mechanism for contacting the prospect.

Personal profiles—only half of which are 100% complete according to LinkedIn—require users to supply information about themselves in several main categories:

- Headline
- Summary
- Experience
- Skills & Expertise
- Status Updates
- Groups
- Education
- Additional Information
- Honors & Awards

In the newest version of LinkedIn, members (sales representatives, for example) can also post projects, videos and other content relevant to their industries; for example, videos, photos and news stories. The more relevant the keywords (the mechanism that the LinkedIn search engine uses to search profiles) and content (information specifically suited for international exhibitor prospects) posted in the profiles, the more often user profiles will appear in search results from potential exhibitors.

Continued on page 2

SUBSCRIBE NOW



Company pages are another way for exhibitions to be found by prospective exhibitors. One advantage that LinkedIn company pages have over exhibition websites is the social networking capabilities of the pages. For example, LinkedIn users can follow a company (or an exhibition) as a way to receive regular updates on the event and the industry.

Company pages don't have to be restricted to the organization producing the event, such as a trade association. Organizers can create company pages for specific shows or even pages designed specifically for the international exhibitors of a show. One reason to create a company page for international exhibitors is to offer updates with content specific to the needs and concerns of overseas prospects.

Company pages can fulfill a number of objectives:

- Share show content
- Build a community of international prospects
- Understand international customers
- Get customer feedback

LinkedIn Groups

Another offering of LinkedIn is the Groups feature. Members can join up to 50 groups or create a group of their own. "Being in the RIGHT groups is possibly the single most important thing you can do," says Josh Turner of the company LinkedInSelling.com. However, when the existing groups are too broad or nonexistent, an exhibition organizer can create a specific group or a sub-group that targets international exhibitor prospects exclusively.

Well-moderated groups—those with specific guidelines for posting and group managers to keep the posts on topic—are an important way to identify prospects through the discussions they participate in and the group membership that is visible to other members. Although groups require a consistent effort to stimulate conversation and attract members, while keeping sales pitches from suppliers to a minimum, they deliver the highest return of any other tactic for prospecting according to Turner.

Advanced People Search

In addition to profiles, pages and groups, LinkedIn provides its members with data mining capabilities through its Advanced Search options. Users can perform searches using pre-established criteria including keywords, location, job titles, company names, industry, language and interests. The searches can be saved and the results grouped so that sales representatives can contact prospects through LinkedIn's email features or direct email mail (if the prospect has published it in his profile). LinkedIn doesn't always provide full contact information for members, but often a quick Google search can fill in the blanks.



Josh Turner recommends creating a "prospect profile cheat sheet" detailing the search strategy, target industries, number of employees in the prospect company, top position titles, LinkedIn groups where prospects are most engaged and seniority level of target individuals to organize the search criteria.

Connect Around Content, Not the Show

At the end of the day, LinkedIn is a sophisticated content delivery platform. Without compelling content that is specifically targeted to prospects and designed to drive engagement, organizers will not achieve optimal results. All of the mechanisms—profiles, groups and updates—designed to attract potential customers must contain valuable information about the industry, other exhibitors and how to be successful in the U.S. and NOT (necessarily) about the show. Prospects can obtain show information from the exhibition website. When used correctly, LinkedIn is an amazing sales conversion tool that exhibition organizers can use to build their domestic shows.

Global View Notes is published by:

Rogers Worldwide

1550 E. Higgins Road, Suite 106
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

Contact:

Jeanette Mucha, LCB
Director National Sales
Tel: (847) 806-9200
Mobile: (847) 970-8017
jmucha@rerogers.com

Editor:

Michelle Bruno,
CMP, CEM

Tel: (801) 520-0797

michelle@brunogroup.com

Past Articles:

You can find all our articles archived on our web site.

www.rogersworldwide.com/content.asp?PageID=241

For a list of offices and agents of Roger Worldwide, visit:

<http://rerogers.com/uploads/AGENTLIST2012.pdf>