Romancing Prospects in LinkedIn

Contents

Overview

LinkedIn networking is a lot like online dating — hear us out.

When you're dating online, you:

- Use algorithms to find potential matches (a.k.a. prospects).
- View prospects' profiles before connecting.
- Need to respond to messages in a timely manner, or risk losing the connection.
- Sometimes need a few messages going back-and-forth before they commit to a date.
- Usually have better results writing a more specific message that shows you've read their profile (vs. just writing "Hi").

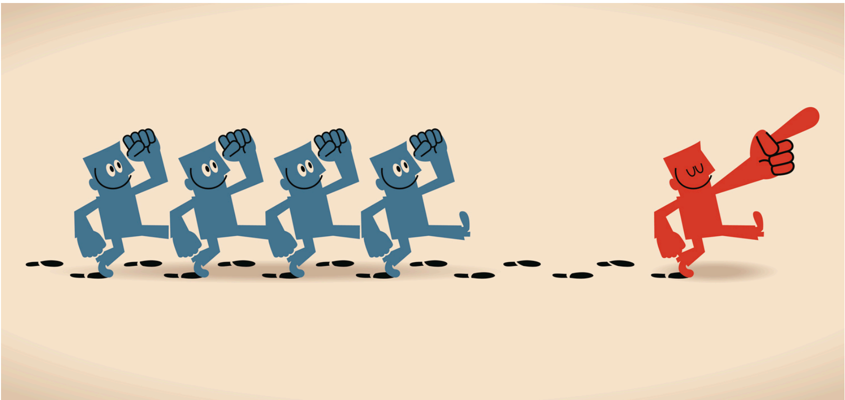
Sound familiar?

- While you're likely not using LinkedIn to find love, the principles are still the same.
- This eBook will help you refine the way you communicate with your LinkedIn prospects to ultimately increase conversions.

Choosing Your Communication Method: The First Impression

First impressions are critical in dating and in sales, even when that first impression happens through text. The form that you use to communicate matters. For instance, if you were looking to woo a potential love interest, you could:

- Send them a letter or email.
- Call or text.
- Send flowers, chocolates, or another gift.
- Ask for an introduction from a mutual friend.
- Walk up and start a conversation.



The method you choose depends on a variety of factors, like whether you already know the person, if you have shared connections, where you are when you meet them, their personal style, and your own personal preferences. There are pros and cons to each choice, and not every option will work for every situation. ***LinkedIn is the same!***

Choosing Your Communication Method: The First Impression

There are three main ways of connecting with your prospects in LinkedIn:

1. InMail
2. Connection requests
3. Nurturing connections

Each is uniquely different. So, how do you know which one is best?

InMail: Digital Cold Calling

InMail is the LinkedIn equivalent of cold calling. It's blatant solicitation. When a prospect receives an InMail they expect to be sold to.

This is the most similar to online dating. You are messaging prospects whose profiles you might have seen and liked, but you don't know much about them beyond what they say online. You have never met them before and, as far as you know, you don't have any mutual friends or connections.

But, just like online dating, there are ways that you can optimize your initial message (InMail) for success.

Know why you are targeting this prospect. What exactly about them makes you think they could be a good match? The more personalized you can make your message, the better. This is the dating equivalent of sending a "Hey, beautiful" vs. "Hello, I noticed that you like rock climbing. I also enjoy it! What are your favourite mountains?"

InMail: Digital Cold Calling

Don't make it all about yourself. No online dater, or LinkedIn member, wants to receive a message telling them why the message sender is perfect for them. It's too much, too soon. You want them to reach this conclusion on their own. Instead, focus on them. Perhaps ask them about something on their profile or mention that you are in a similar industry. Look for the mutual connection.

Keep it succinct. A sure-fire way to scare off a potential love interest is by sending them a novel-length initial message. Same goes for InMails. Keep your initial communication to one or two short paragraphs. You want the relationship and conversation to grow over time. Gauge their interest first, but don't come across as overeager.

Leave room for conversation. When you write your message, you want to make it easy for your prospect to respond — or take the desired action. You might leave a question at the end, like "I'm curious how you liked <University>?" or "How did you get into <Industry>?" This could also be an offer, such as asking if they would be okay with you sending them a connection request or asking for a meeting.

InMail: Digital Cold Calling

Like online dating, there is also the risk that your prospect won't check or respond to your message. This could be for any number of reasons.

But the great thing about LinkedIn is that if your target doesn't check or respond to your InMail, you get that credit returned to you.

It's important to check into your account regularly to make sure that when these credits are applied, you re-use them to target new prospects and achieve maximum value.

In summary: InMails are great for connecting with new people, but they are seen as more sales-focused. Make yours personal and thoughtful to stand out from the crowd.

Connection Requests: Have We Met Before?

Connection requests are the dating equivalent of contacting someone you know peripherally. You already have the hardest part out of the way — recognition.

Somehow, somewhere before you have encountered this person. This could have been at an event, through a shared class, mutual acquaintances, etc. You may not have met in person, but you run in the same circles. They are likely to recognize your name or organization.

Now you are interested in getting to know them better. This is when you send them a connection request.

When connecting to a new prospect it's critical that you identify how you know them. If you're in a mutual group, say that. If you have connections in common, mention that. If you took a Victorian poetry class together in university, reference that.

Connection Requests: Have We Met Before?

When inviting a prospect to connect, the invitee has three options:

- Click “Accept.”
- Click “Ignore.”
- Click “I don’t know.”

If too many people click that they don’t know you, your LinkedIn account can be restricted, and then suspended, and then you could lose it altogether.

To avoid this, there are certain best practices you need to follow when sending out connection requests. These include:

- Don’t send too many requests at once. Focus on quality over quantity. If you are going to do some prospecting, limit yourself to 10-15 per week.
- Personalize your message. Don’t just use the canned message offered by LinkedIn. Make it clear that this message is intended for the recipient — not a mass missive.

Connection Requests: Have We Met Before?

Best practices for making new connections continued:

- Indicate in your message how the prospect would recognize you. For instance, say if you are in a mutual group, industry, association, have mutual connections, or the like.
- Do not solicit the prospect in a connection request – EVER! Your aim here is to get a connection and start a conversation, not sell to them. That will come with time. This would be the dating equivalent of confessing your love right off the bat. It could work, but chances are it will just be off-putting.

The true goal here is to increase your network and create a long-lasting relationship. Once you have the connection, you can continually soft market to these prospects. It's easier to maintain your recognition through your status feed updates and you can nurture or communicate with them without having to use InMail credits. You're also setting the stage for developing a deeper relationship.

In summary: connection requests are for prospects you already have established recognition with, but who are you not yet linked to.

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Nurturing Connections: The Courting Process

Once you have the connection, it’s time to nurture them. You shouldn’t ignore them (a.k.a. “ghosting”) but you also don’t want to abuse this privilege.

This is the romantic equivalent of courting your prospect. Proceed with caution — rushing them into a commitment or overwhelming them with attention isn’t the best strategy. You may have them interested, but they can be scared off easily.

In the dating world, this might look like going out together, sending flowers, or meeting each other’s friends. On LinkedIn, you can nurture your connections by:

- Sending them messages on LinkedIn.
- Liking and commenting on their content.
- Noticing their updates and commenting accordingly.
- Tagging them on content you think is relevant to them.

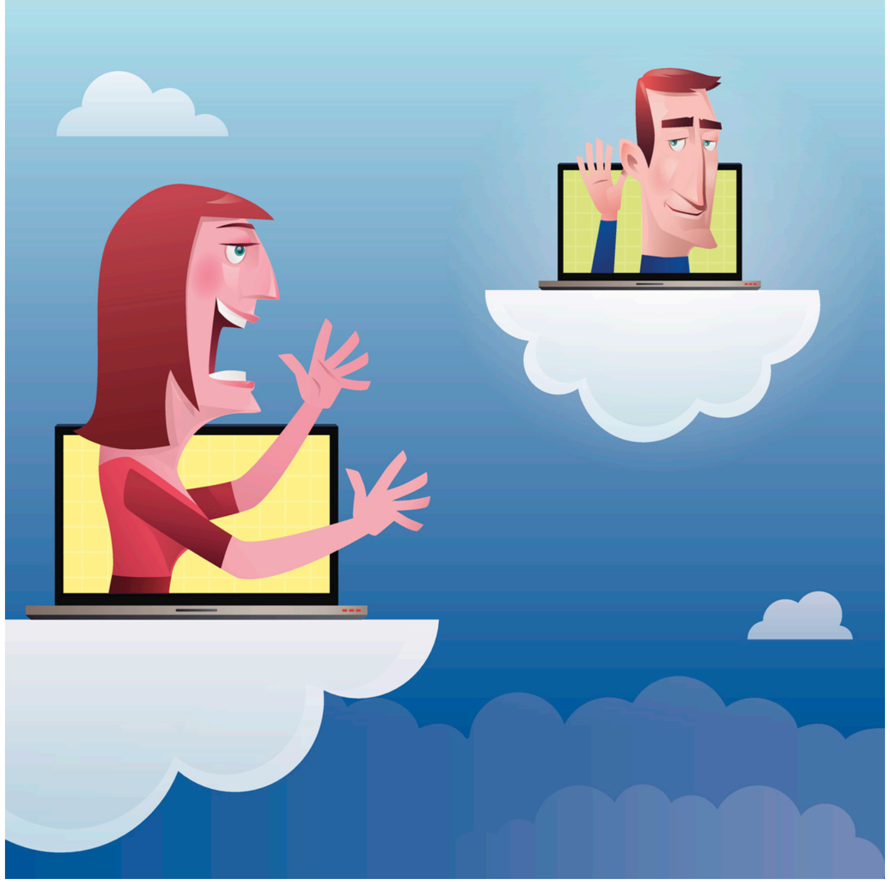
Nurturing Connections: The Courting Process

This can be a slow process — it doesn't always happen overnight. Some prospects will require more nurturing than others.

Try your best to:

Personalize your messages.

You still want to sound human in your communications and make your prospect feel like they matter. This might include referencing their recent posts or company news, asking them about something in their life/business that shows you are paying attention, or even just making sure you include their name/company name in your messaging.



Nurturing Connections: The Courting Process

Focus on the call to action vs. what you want to sell.

Rather than trying to make the pitch in your message, focus on what you want to gain from the message.

Example:

Hi NAME, I wanted to reach out to you and see how things are going. We rolled out some really great solutions this year and I was meet so you could share your goals and I can see contribute to your success. What is your availability in the upcoming couple of weeks?

By taking this approach you are making it about helping your prospect, vs. selling your services.

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Nurturing Connections: The Courting Process

Do not over nurture.

If you are sending a meeting request to someone whom you don't know very well, and they don't get back to you, wait 30-60 days to follow up. People do not like being spammed on LinkedIn and you will lose connections if you message too frequently.

Monitor and revise your messaging.

It's unlikely that the same messaging is going to work for everybody. This is where personalization comes in, but in some cases, there may only be so much personalization you can do.

The other part of the equation is tracking what is and isn't working. Are you finding that a certain intro or call-to-action gets better results? Or that a certain demographic of connections responds to one type of wording better than another? These are all important things to note and use as you continually refine your communications.

In summary: your job isn't done once you've made a connection. Nurture your connections over time to build up to a conversion.

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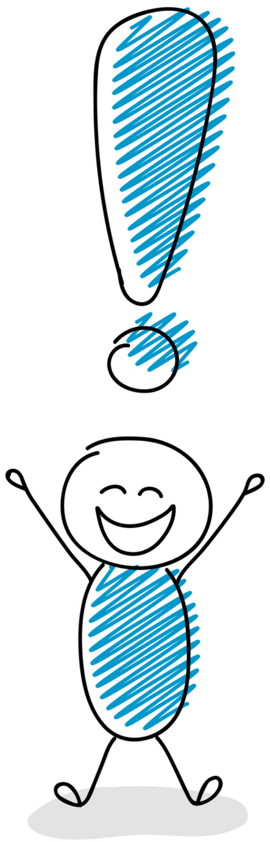
Final Tips for Crafting LinkedIn Communications



Remember when you are sending LinkedIn messages that connections take time and work to develop. In romance terms you are going for the “end game” vs. the instant win that quickly fizzles out.

As a general rule of thumb, think about the kind of messages that you like to receive. What works and doesn’t work for you? What connection requests do you tend to ignore and why?

Although you are interacting over a computer, it’s important to still be human. Make it personal, make it engaging, and the conversions will follow.

Other best practices to ensure you’re making the most of your connections:

- Think about your prospects in the content that you share.
- Do you have a blog that you think certain people in your network might be particularly interested in? You can tag them or send it to them in a message explaining why you thought they might like it.

Final Tips for Crafting LinkedIn Communications

Keep most messages short.

Follow your connections' leads. Unless they are sending you paragraphs-length responses, you shouldn't get too wordy either. Keep information to what people need to know. If they are interested in a longer conversation, you could arrange a phone call or a meeting.

Where possible, include a call to action.

What is the purpose of the communication? What do you want the prospect to do? This can be as simple as "Let me know what you think" if you send a blog post, to as complicated as "What dates are you available for coffee?" if you send a meeting request. You want to offer a way for your connection to continue the conversation.

Final Tips for Crafting LinkedIn Communications

Don't forget to follow up.

Your job isn't over after you've sent the message. It's easy to remember to follow up when your subject responds, but don't just cast aside the ones who haven't gotten back to you. Think about your own schedule — you've probably had weeks (or maybe even months) where you were so swamped you could barely make it through your breakfast, let alone your inbox.

- Sometimes people really do just overlook your message. Or they mean to reply and forget. It happens to all of us — but that is why it's so important to give them the benefit of the doubt and follow up.
- A simple "I sent you this a couple of weeks ago," or "I noticed you haven't responded to my invitation — I was wondering if you're still interested" can go a long way. Worst case, they still ignore you. Best case, you make a new connection!

Conclusion

Like dating, creating connections in LinkedIn can be a time-consuming (and sometimes even heart-wrenching) process. You may have some periods where you are sending out connection request after connection request and getting no response.

But also like dating, there are plenty of fish in the sea. And there's a lot less pressure to find "the one." It may take some time for you to find your stride and your perfect match(es) but you'll get there — especially if you follow the tips in this guide.

We hope you have found this eBook useful. Whether you are trying to find love or conversions, the key is to stay hopeful and consistent. You can't win if you don't play the game!

And if you're really stuck, you can ask for help. In romance, you might turn to a matchmaker. For LinkedIn, you could consider turning to the digital equivalent — outsourcing.

For instance, at DigiForce Marketing, we can research prospects, choose the right communication method, craft messaging, and follow up with connections, all while keeping you apprised of the best matches. It takes the hard work out of it so only the most primed leads land on your desk.

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About the Author

DigiForce is a digital marketing agency that understands enterprise business. Our team takes a purpose-driven approach, letting strategy lead content. We have a combined 20+ years working in the digital marketing field.

Within our team, we have experts in strategic marketing, content creation, pay-per-click advertising, website development, and more. We are a one-stop-shop that is your marketing department's greatest ally. We allow you to get more done using less resources.

Work with a Team with a Diverse Skillset

There is nothing worse than reviewing content created by a third party and feeling that they are completely disconnected from your business. Our team members don't just know digital, we also know how to translate your company's message.

We have 20+ years of experience working with companies who provide service to the following industries:

- Technology and software.

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About the Author

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