10 Sneaky Tricks to Leverage LinkedIn for B2B Lead Generation

So you've been around the LinkedIn block for a while now and know how things work:

- You've set up your own profile, your company page, you pinged your classmates, former co-workers, bosses, and your auntie's best friend's husband.

- You weeded out a few spammers and toyed with the LION (LinkedIn Open Networker) concept a bit.

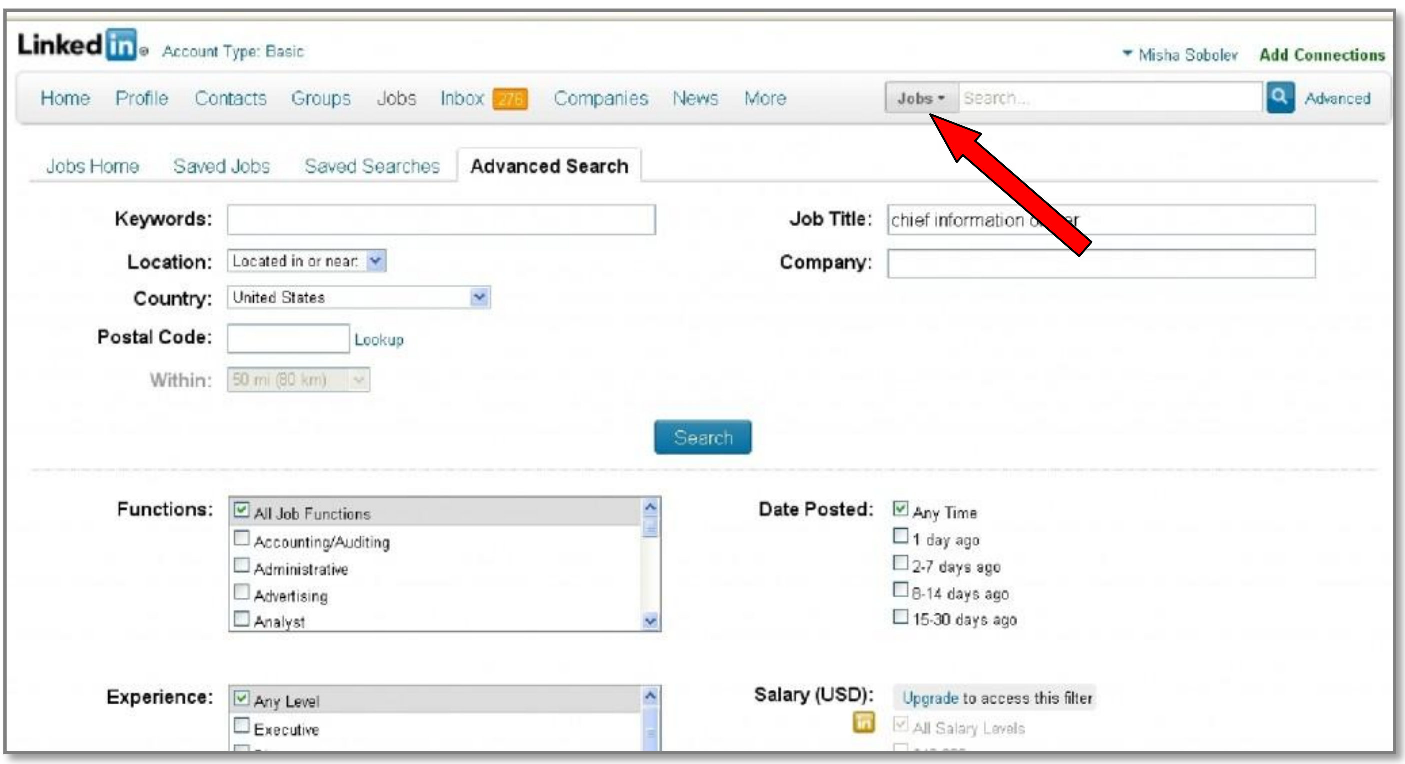
- You spied a little on your competitors and researched a potential client.

- You reached out to a few of your connections over years with mixed results because the response rate was not what you expected.

Don't worry, you are not the only one in this camp!

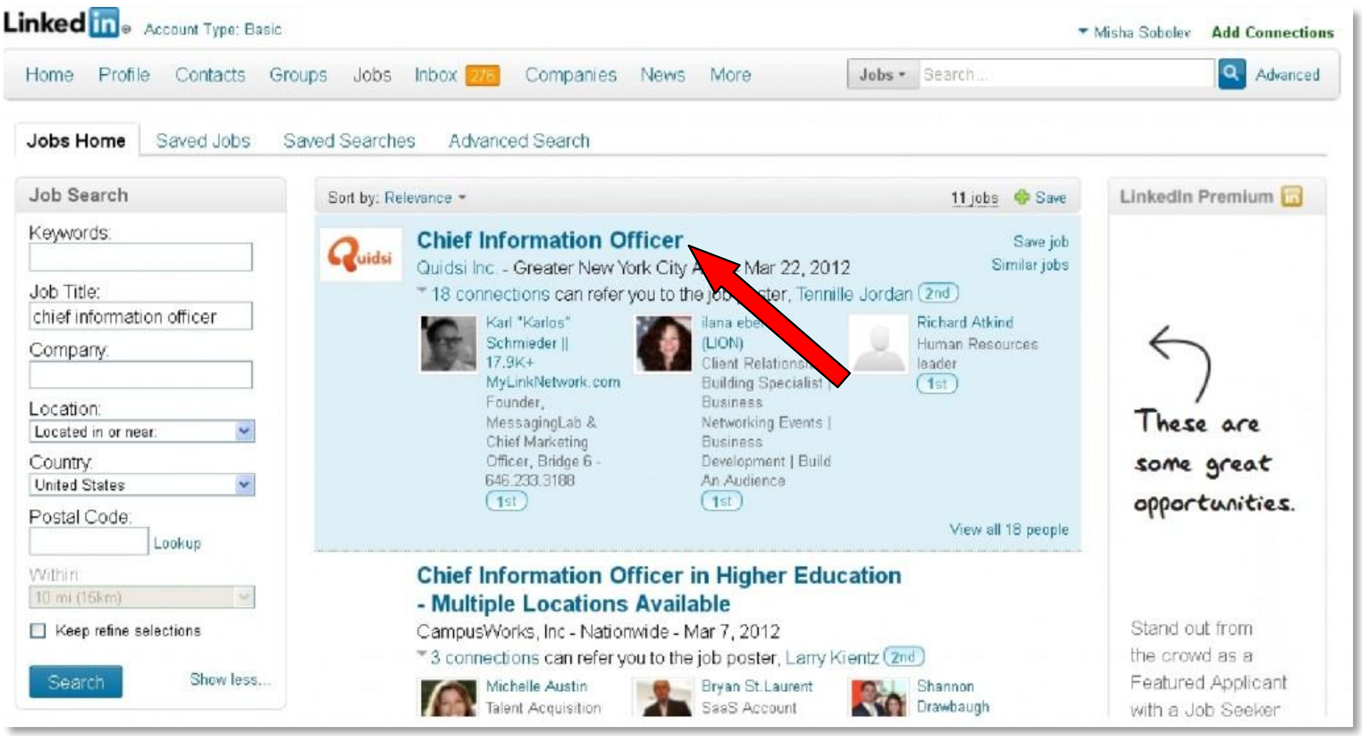
Let's dig into some of the less known tactics that will make your time spent on LinkedIn worth the effort:

#1 Browse job postings for your target niche.



Let's say you are an IT company and your selling your products/services/consulting to Chief Information Officers. Now go search for that title in the Jobs section of LinkedIn and check out the results. This works if your client base has a defined title that can be searched.

In most B2B companies the spectrum of various titles is rather specific. If you are not sure, go to your salesforce account and pull a report with your current / prospective clients – see any titles that pop up more often than others? Search for them on LinkedIn Jobs.



Look what we've found! Quidsi, the parent company of Diapers.com, recently acquired by Amazon in a mega-million dollar deal, is looking for a Chief Information Officer…

That's big! So let's click on that:

Desired Skills & Experience

- A Master's degree (MBA) is required. A Bachelor's degree in Business and Technology Management, Computer Science or a closely related field is also required.
- 15 - 20 years of IT experience, including significant leadership responsibilities as a divisional CIO, corporate CTO or CIO of a large ecommerce enterprise.
- Experience successfully managing technology in organizations going through technology changes.
- Experience building and managing a complex, sophisticated and fully functional network infrastructure, Microsoft .NET environment and web infrastructure from the ground up.
- Exceptional skills in Project Management, System Analysis, System Development, Architecture and foundational technologies such as networking, communications, system platforms, etc.
- Demonstrable expertise in facilitating the process of clarifying organizational strategies and translating them into appropriate technology applications.
- Demonstrable ability to build, motivate and lead effective teams of IT professionals.
- Demonstrated strong interpersonal skills and effective working relationships, strong leadership and negotiation skills.
- Strong knowledge of and experience with software licensing agreements and technology products and services with a well defined return of investment.
- Excellent interpersonal, team building and communication skills.

Preferred Qualifications

This position is conveniently located in Jersey City, NJ, a four minute ride from the World Trade Center and just outside the Exchange Place PATH Station. Bordering the Hudson River, our offices have spectacular panoramic views of Manhattan and New Jersey.

From this list of requirements alone we can get so much valuable information: they run a .NET environment, have a complex network and web infrastructure, etc.

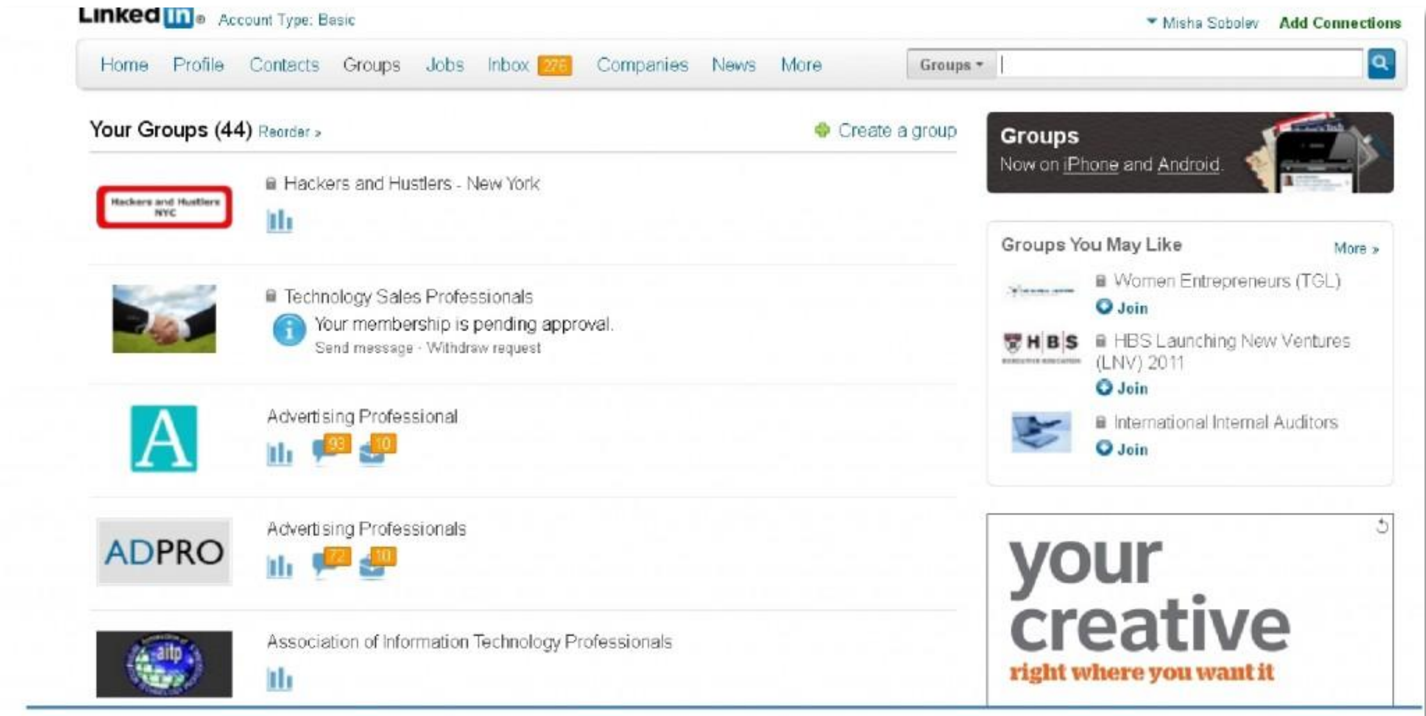
The information that Quidsi is looking for a CIO versatile in .NET technology is valuable and ACTIONABLE insight. Why? I am glad you asked. You can use this info in several ways:

- You will forward this page to your current and potential CIO clients to let them know this job is available. They will say thank you.

- You will make a calendar event for yourself to check LinkedIn or Quidsi's "Leadership" section of the website to see who they end up hiring.

- You will create a ready-to-go email draft with "Congratulations!" subject line that you will fire away, referencing what you know about the person and company as soon as you find out who took the spot. By the way, you can use us for this, as well.

#2 Join groups so you can engage their members.



I love LinkedIn groups. They provide an efficient way to aggregate your audience. Take 20 minutes and search groups that roughly fall in the following categories: Your Target Audience (let's say "Chief Information Officers"), Your Competitors (e.g. "IT Vendors"), Your Complements (non-competing organizations vying for attention of your target audience, e.g. "IT Executive Search").

Now go join those groups, the ones with higher member count first. During the next week:

- Spend 10 minutes every other day in the "listening mode". See who is posting in those groups, what kind of content gets posted, what content gets the most engagement

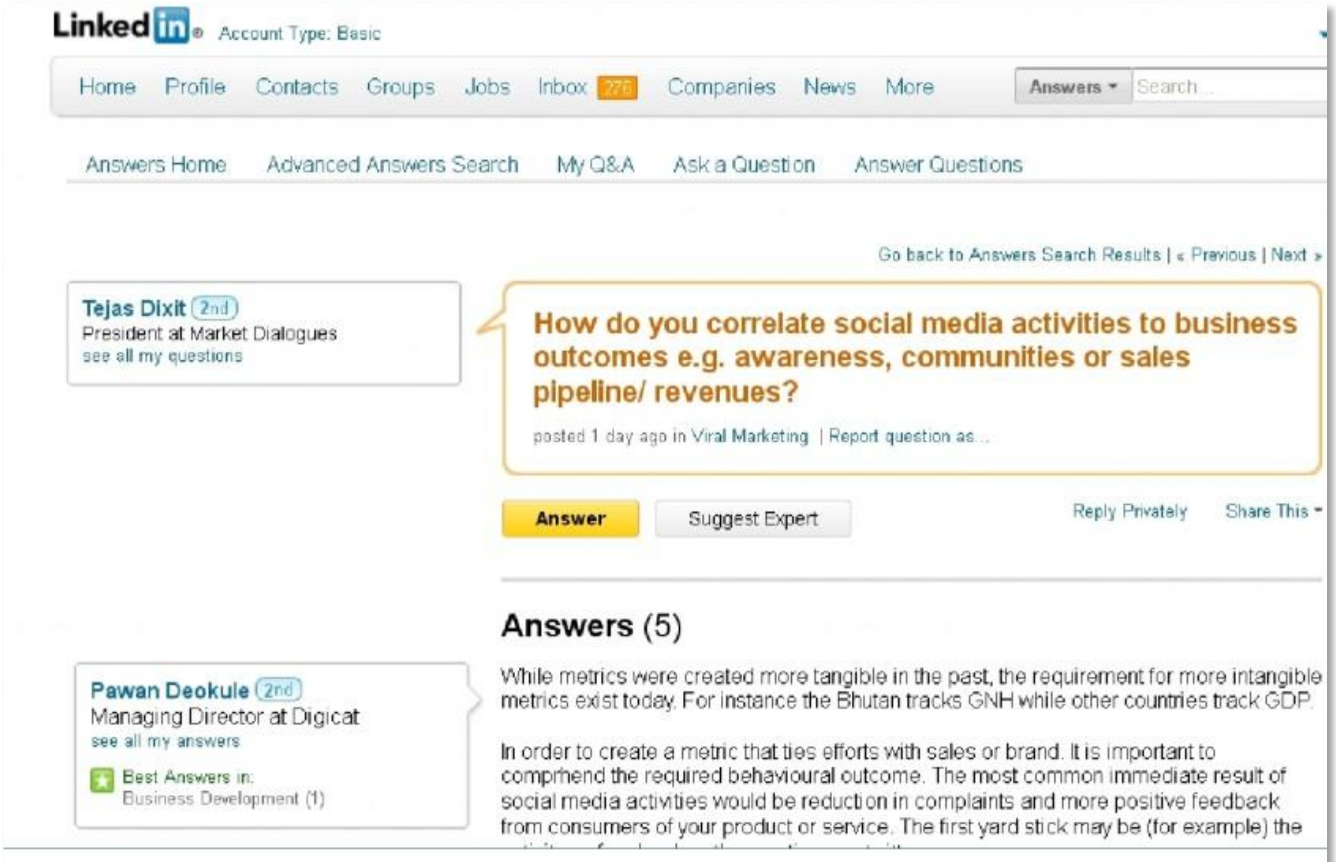
- Create valuable and engaging content with a compelling CTA and link it to your landing page. See how many clicks you get.

- Play around tweaking the type of content, headlines, CTAs to see what works

- Engage group members who post comments on your posts.

- Rinse and repeat.

#3 Be ready to answer – LinkedIn Answers



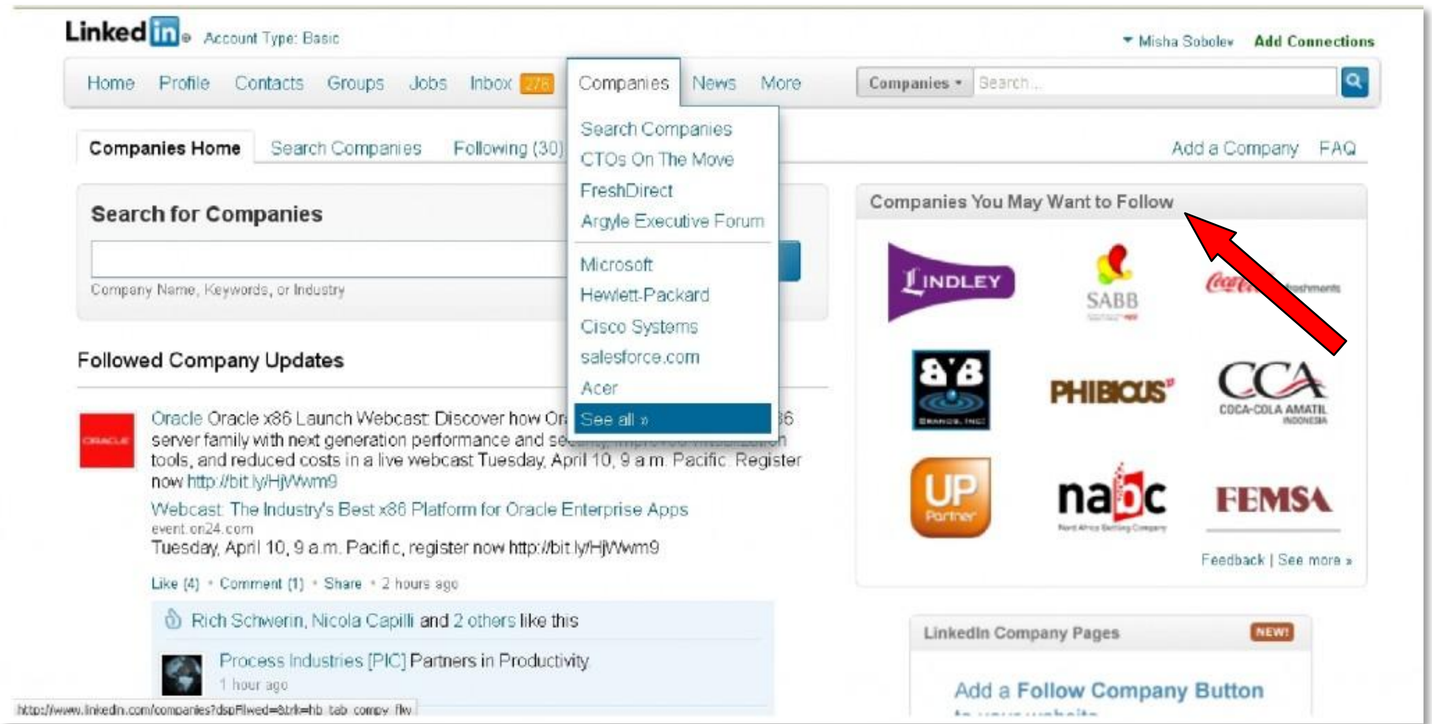
If you were selling social media consulting, wouldn't you want to be the first one to answer this question above?

Just search for questions containing your keywords, be it "social media", "IT consulting", or "oil drilling". Sort by recency because old itches were already resolved and most likely had a ton of questions.

Most people asking a question are not looking for a pitch. So answer the question without selling your company's solution. If you come across as a knowledgeable expert in the field, the selling part will come almost by itself.

Include links to your landing pages – that's where you will convert. Be consistent and steady, this tool only works with a long term horizon.

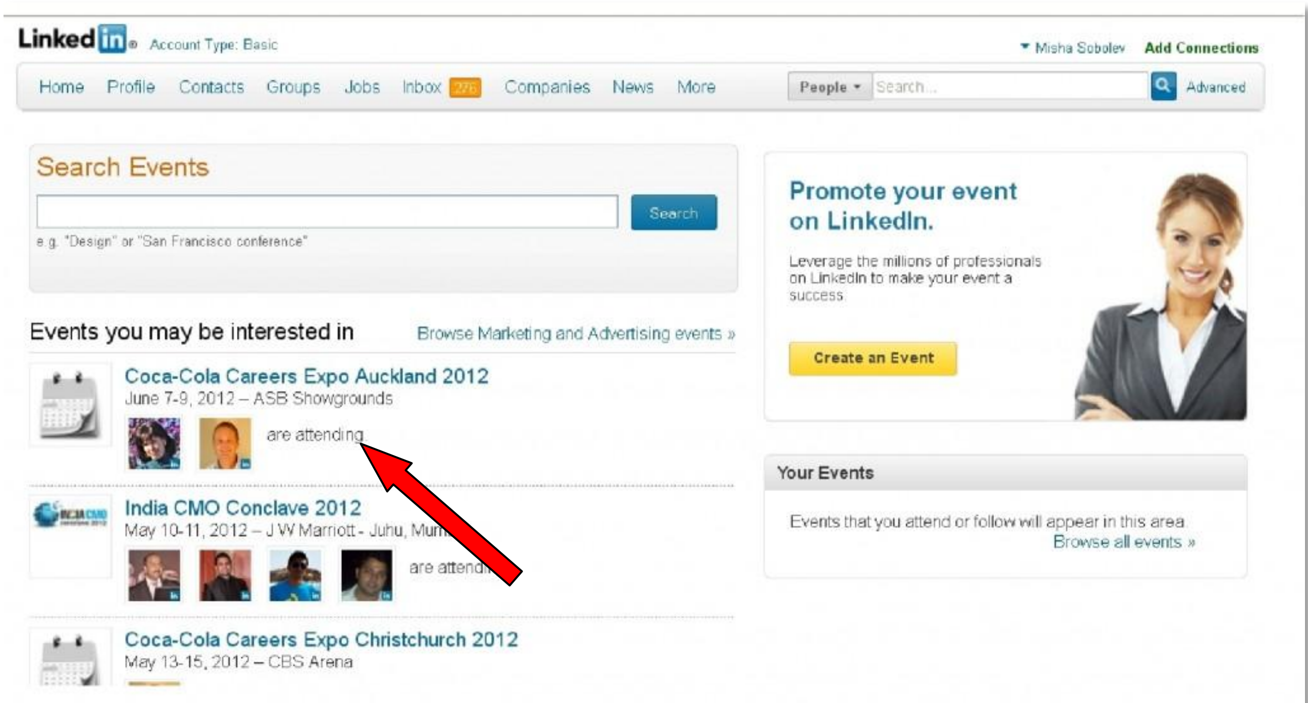
#4 Follow your target companies so you can engage them.



Have a list of companies you want to engage? Follow them on LinkedIn. You will get automatic updates from LinkedIn and keep your hand on the pulse of companies that are your potential clients. They will GIVE YOU the insights that you will turn into powerful hooks in your outbound email or phone campaign.

You may see that your client is expanding to a new market, hiring new senior executives, raised financing. These are just few of the many sales trigger events you can pick up from the LinkedIn feed of the companies you follow. If you'd like to find out how to use [Sales Trigger Events] in your sales and marketing, [check this out].

#5 Keep track of LinkedIn Events : who's speaking, who's attending



Events offer an unparalleled yet often overlooked business development resource . If you attend, the events offer ways to engage your current and prospective clients in a "safe" environment that is most conducive to building a relationship: chatting about hobbies, sport or families over lunch gets your further than months of chasing your prospect over the phone.

Make sure you do your prospecting ahead of time: make a list of relevant speakers and attendees ahead of time and ping them to establish a connection BEFORE the event. This will get you much further DURING the event.

If you are NOT attending, events are still awesome. You can reference events in your emails pitches:

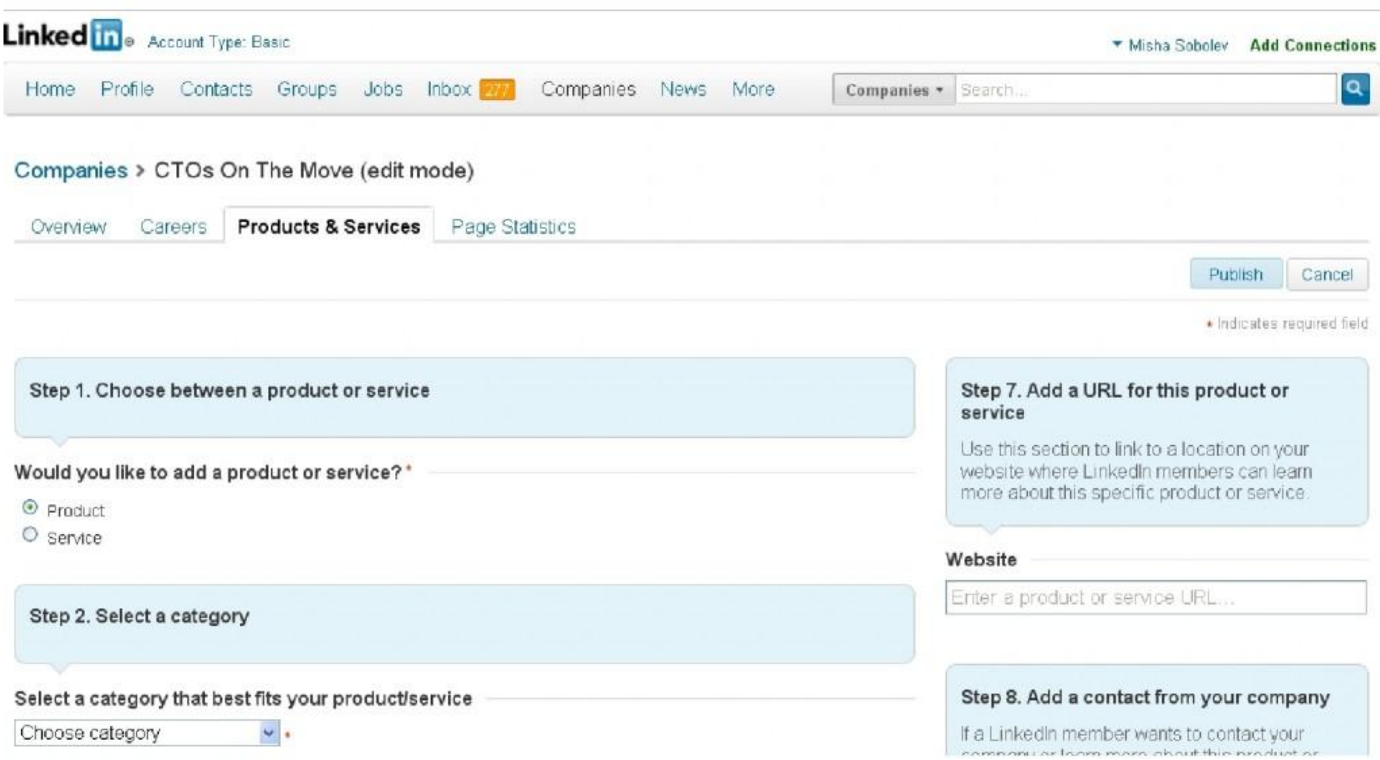
"… I've noticed you are speaking at…"

"…Unfortunately, I couldn't attend the event you were presenting at, however…"

"…I saw you among the attendees of the forum, how did you like your experience at the event? I heard…"

These will give you 10x response rate vs. regular canned email scripts.

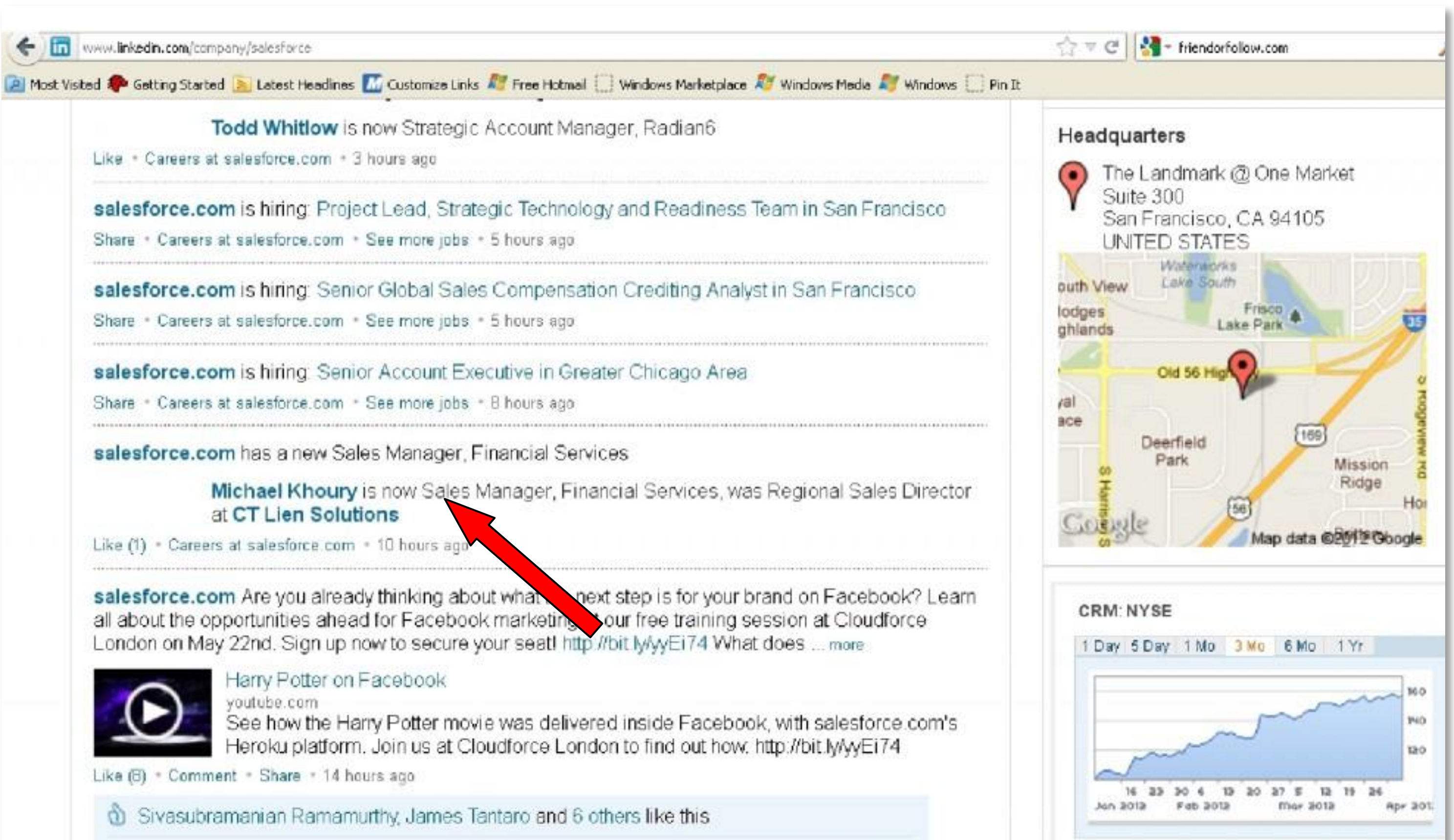
#6 Create Product Page at the Company profile



Regardless whether you are selling a product or service, set it up as a separate page on LinkedIn Products and Services section. Consider this your extra landing / content page.

This is an awesome location for your product descriptions, calls-to-action, customer testimonials, and recommendations. Make sure you use this tool to populate with content and links you already have.

#7 Check Comings and Goings on Company Profile Page



The company news feed on LinkedIn contains updates when professionals and executives change jobs. This is gold. Seriously. By tracking appointments and promotions of your current and potential clients on LinkedIn you can:

- Make sure you stay on top of what’s going on with your current clients. Imagine of your competitor is first to congratulate your best client on an important promotion. What would that do to your business relationship?

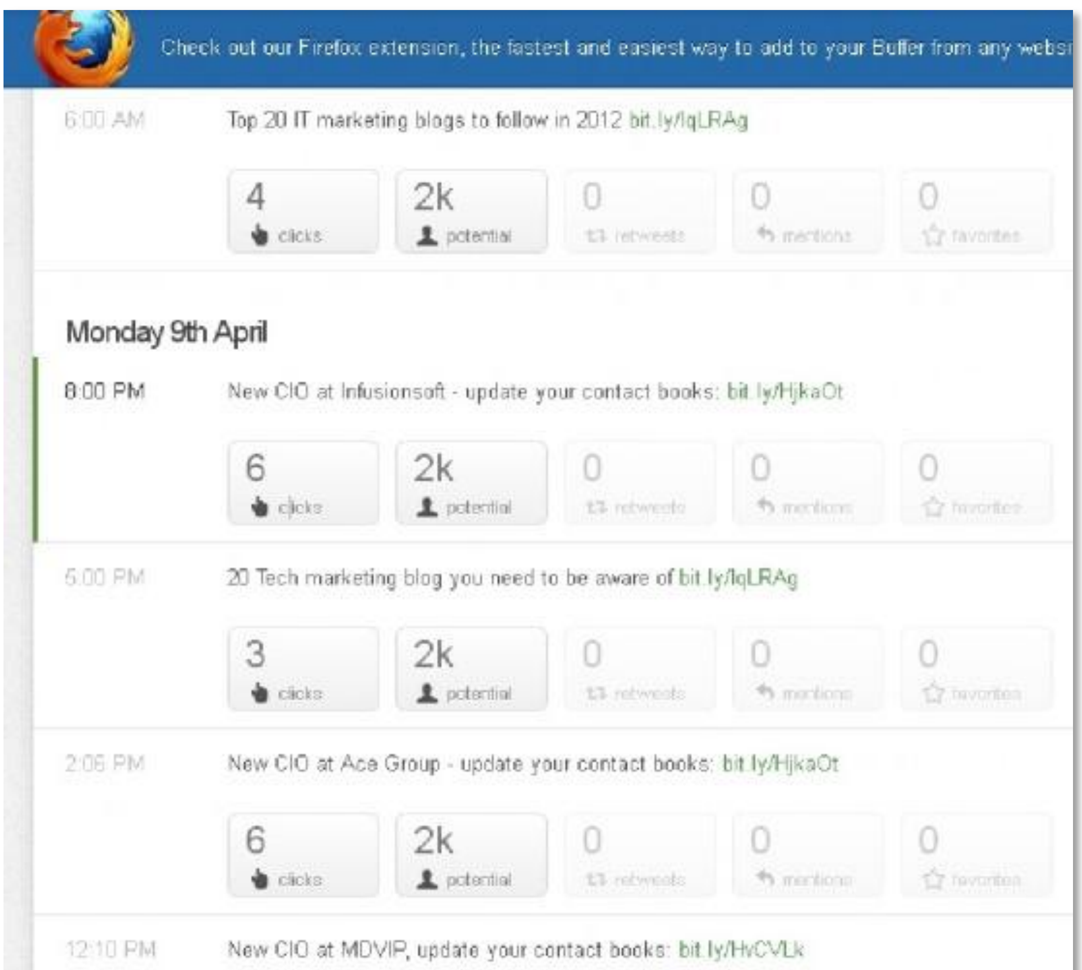
- On the flip side, be the first to know when your potential clients move around. That's the most opportune time to reach out to them.

- Usually information in LinkedIn is updated before it gets to Hoovers, Jigsaw, ZoomInfo and other industrial size database so when you are calling, no one else is. Imagine what this does to your response rate!

- Research shows that executives tend to take first few weeks after the appointment to chart their course going forward, connect with vendors, assess their upcoming challenges. That's the absolute best sales trigger you can use. Pick up that phone and call.

You can use CTOsOnTheMove for keeping you updated on things like that as well.

#8 Use the buffer app



One problem with social media is that it does take time: to find or generate sharable content and push it to your followers. Batching things works, however only to an extent: you can't really "do" social media once a week and push 100 updates at once, that's just not how this works.

Not to worry! There are plenty of apps that allow you to schedule updates now. My favorite is Buffer: the best design and UX I've seen in a while; allows you to automate updates not only for LinkedIn, but for Twitter and Facebook as well; it also provides you excellent analytics so you can see what works and what doesn't. The best part: it is FREE! Well, the basic version that would be sufficient for most needs.

Go sign up for Buffer now – you'll love it!

#9 Engage, Don't Sell.

First things first: let's just be clear that we are NOT selling on LinkedIn. Yes, you read that right – **NO SELLING ON LINKEDIN!** It is not a sales platform. Then what are we doing here then? Oh, I am glad you asked:

You are going to increase your reach (get in front of more people), engage them with your valuable content and drive them to your landing pages.

… So no straight up pitches. Instead seed result-oriented content, click-worthy linkbaited headlines that would drive traffic to your landing pages.

Let's unpack this:

1. Increase Your Reach

LinkedIn is an excellent platform for connecting effectively with vast number of people many of whom will be your future clients. You can increase your reach by actively outbound connecting (sending out LinkedIn invitations to your contact list, people you met at a conference, etc.), accepting most of legitimate inbound connecting requests, joining relevant groups, etc. We are not going for quality, but mostly for quantity here.

2. Engage Your Audience with Valuable Content

What's valuable content? It is not "here is a press release on how great we were last year" – it is not actionable, not relevant and not interesting for your clients. "101 Ways to Increase Client Engagement and Grow Your Sales" is valuable content – it is specific, relevant, valuable and presented in small, bite-sized chunks.

3. Drive Your Audience to a Landing Page

Remember, you are not trying to close a sale on LinkedIn, you are trying to establish enough interest and trust with your LinkedIn connections to move to the next step in the sales process, whatever it might be. So make sure that your valuable content is full of appealing, actionable and A/B tested CTAs (Calls-to-Action) with links to your landing pages where your LinkedIn connections can engage further.

#10 Measure and Improve.

Measure traffic referred from LinkedIn (through Google Analytics), measure clicks on links (through bit.ly url shortening service).

What doesn't get measured doesn't get improved. What to measure:

- what type of content gets you the most clicks?

- what type of content gets most shares, likes, and retweets?

- what time of the day is the most effective for posting?

- what headlines and titles work best?

- what social media platform gets you the most traffic?

Bonus tips: good LinkedIn practices to follow:

- Accept all incoming connect requests

- Connect: after meetings, conferences, tradeshow ping people you met with a LinkedIn request

- Connect with your school alums – you will find out that some of them are in a position to hire you or buy from you. At the very least introduce you to those who will

- Give forward: post useful, valuable content before asking for anything.

- Use the 15-3-1 ratio: for every **15** pieces of good relevant content you post that's not your own, engage **3** people with questions and/or comments and only then post **1** link to your own landing page with a CTA.

- Link your other social presence – blog, website, twitter, facebook, etc. – to your LinkedIn account.

- Include LinkedIn button in your email signature, website, blog, etc.

- Follow companies : clients, competitors, complements to monitor what they are doing with LinkedIn, apply what works for you.