

Sponsored Messaging Playbook

A Beginner's Guide to Engaging Business Buyers

How Businesses Use LinkedIn Messaging to
Engage Their Audience in a More Personal Way



With
Best-in-Class
Examples

Why businesses are adding the messaging channel to their marketing mix



89% of consumers would like to use messaging with businesses, but only 48% of businesses use it to engage with prospects and customers.¹

People want to *interact* with businesses via messaging

In fact, mobile messaging is quickly becoming the preferred channel for communication — and a key touchpoint in the customer journey.² This presents a new opportunity for brands to engage prospects and customers in a more personal and interactive way.

LinkedIn is the place to do this. Why?



Audience

With over 675 million members, LinkedIn has assembled the world's largest professional audience. These are the world's business leaders and decision makers, plus the people who influence these decision makers and the practitioners doing the hands-on work. LinkedIn's best-in-class targeting ensures your message reaches the audiences who matter the most to you.



Environment

In this professional community, quality conversations and content thrive in the feed. Members come back to LinkedIn regularly to check in and see what's new with their network, or to learn about the latest B2B and B2C trends. They're also increasingly spending their time in LinkedIn Messaging, where they can have more personal, one-on-one conversations with colleagues, recruiters, and yes, businesses.

¹ Twilio, [2019 Consumer Report](#)

² Gartner Report, "Cool Vendors in Conversational Marketing" (Sept. 2019)



Engagement

In the last five years, messages sent via LinkedIn Messaging has more than quadrupled — and our messaging reply rate has grown 30%. In other words, marketers and members are sending more messages and seeing more replies.

That's because Messaging is the place where conversations happen — and conversations can help create intimacy between your business and your audience, helping you drive tangible results no matter what your objectives are.

Now that it's clear why you should make LinkedIn Messaging a key channel in your marketing strategy, the rest of this playbook will help you understand how to get started with **LinkedIn Sponsored Messaging**. To inspire you, we share insights and guidance from industry leaders, and showcase best-in-class examples.

To curate this content, we spoke to marketing leaders leveraging LinkedIn Messaging today. We also consulted our internal experts at LinkedIn.

So let's dive in. How can you use Sponsored Messaging to engage your prospects?

In the last five years, messages sent via LinkedIn Messaging has more than quadrupled — and our messaging reply rate has grown 30%.

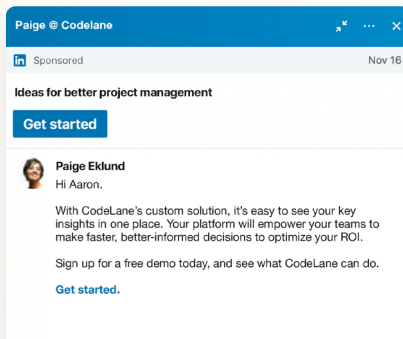


LinkedIn Messaging connects the world's professionals through smarter, more productive conversations. Through LinkedIn Messaging, members can communicate with other members that they are connected to for free.

Brands and individuals, who aren't connected, also have the option to send members messages via InMail credits³ or Sponsored Messaging.

³ LinkedIn Help Center, "[Purchasing and Sending an InMail](#)"

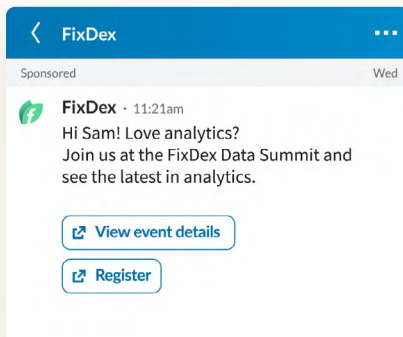
Sponsored Messaging comes in two flavors:



Message Ads

Send direct messages to your prospects to spark immediate action

A message ad is only delivered to your audience when they're active on LinkedIn. These ads stand out in an uncluttered environment, delivering a targeted message with a single call-to-action button. LinkedIn's Message Ads drive stronger engagement and response than traditional email marketing, with average open rates of 50% vs. 21% industry benchmark.⁴ See for yourself by directing prospects to your landing page, or a Lead Gen Form, and optimizing results with reporting that shows who is taking action on your ad.



Conversation Ads

Start quality conversations with prospects with a choose-your-own-path experience

Conversation Ads allow you to deliver multiple offers and types of content in a single message for a highly engaging experience. You can drive prospects to multiple landing pages or a Lead Gen Form, and see how many people click on your content and each offer, and how engaged they are in the conversation.

⁴ Mailchimp, "[Email Marketing Benchmarks](#)"



Pro tips

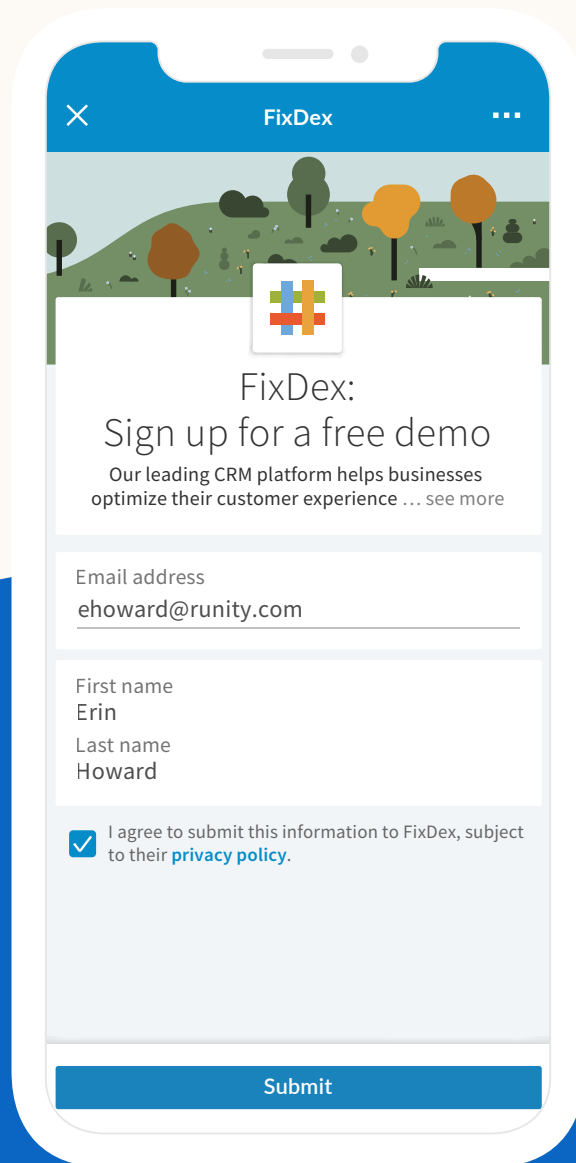
Don't know where to start with content? For a Message Ad, ask your email marketing team to share a top-performing email. Use it as a base template and adjust for your needs by including links to your assets and [adding LinkedIn macros](#) to personalize your Message Ad to each recipient.

For a Conversation Ad, simply select one of our templates directly in Campaign Manager. Examples of available templates by objective include:

- Drive trials and demos
- Offer professional services
- Promote your podcast
- Drive event or webinar registrations

Available for both Message Ads and Conversation Ads, Lead Gen Forms are short, smart data capture forms optimized for mobile.

By pre-filling in key attributes from members' LinkedIn profiles, Lead Gen Forms make it easy for members to opt in and sign up. As a result, Lead Gen Forms dramatically increase the number of campaign leads, and send CPL plummeting.



The image shows a mobile phone screen with a lead generation form for FixDex. The form is titled "FixDex: Sign up for a free demo" and includes a sub-header "Our leading CRM platform helps businesses optimize their customer experience ... see more". The form fields are pre-filled with the following information:

- Email address: ehoward@runity.com
- First name: Erin
- Last name: Howard

Below the form fields, there is a checkbox labeled "I agree to submit this information to FixDex, subject to their [privacy policy](#)." which is checked. At the bottom of the form is a blue "Submit" button.

It's easy to get started with both Message Ads and Conversation Ads. We recommend you A/B test both formats on your audience, and see which performs best for your marketing objective.

5 steps to Sponsored Messaging success



To set up your Sponsored Messaging up for success, follow these best practices:

1. Map your customer's journey

Messaging solutions are powerful because they make it possible to reach the right person at the right time, with the right message. To use them effectively, you need to understand where your customers are in their journey. Prospects early in their journey aren't yet ready to learn about a specific solution. But those further along often seek a range of content about your solution, how it compares to others, and how others like them have used it to achieve success.

To get the most out of your messaging ad solutions, map out your customer's journey. Determine where in the buyer's journey you want to engage your prospects via LinkedIn Messaging, and what result you want from that conversation or message. Psst, in some cases, messaging makes sense for top- and -mid funnel objectives like driving brand awareness and consideration. We share examples of companies using Sponsored Messaging for just that, so read on!

2. Organize your content and assets

Once you pinpoint where in the customer's journey you want to leverage Sponsored Messaging, audit your content and determine which assets will help accelerate the buying process by making it easier for prospects. By the way, your sales team will thank you for the higher quality leads you send their way.

A top question we hear is which type of content works best in LinkedIn Messaging.

Brand consideration

→ Reach out to your audience with blog posts, webinars, or industry trends and analysis

Drive leads and turn prospects into customers

→ Consider sharing product demos or tutorials, and customer success stories, or invite prospects to attend an event



Pro tips

- If you're sharing PDFs or downloadable content, use Lead Gen Forms to collect leads directly in LinkedIn to drive 2x more conversions.
- Use a YouTube link in your ad content, and the video will automatically unroll in your Message or Conversation Ad.*
- Add images to your Conversation Ad to drive even more engagement.

* Later in 2020, all video formats will be supported.

3. Create your journey map

Promoting one or more content assets or offers to your target audience? Start with a journey map for your Conversation Ad.

Consider your audience's objectives to determine what to promote in your ads. What questions might your target audience ask at each stage of the journey? And which content assets can answer those questions?

The marketers we spoke with suggest using sticky notes or a whiteboard to outline your Q&A flow. Your goal is to map out the conversation and identify where to incorporate your content and assets. For instance, if you're trying to drive event registrations, your prospects will likely ask the following questions:

- When is the event?
- Who are the guest speakers?
- How much does the event cost?

After taking inventory, you could plan these assets to answer the questions:

- A website listing event details, agenda, and guest speakers
- A one-sheet promoting the event
- A discount code



Once you've gathered your questions, potential answers, and assets, determine if you want to allow the conversation to branch off to other conversation flows. You do that by providing your prospects with multiple options to choose from in your Conversation Ad.

Not sure how to start? Not to worry! Our Conversation Ad templates in Campaign Manager will help you get started. Edit any of the templates to make them your own.

4. Craft customer-centric messaging

Most vendor messaging and content focus on the brand and its offerings — instead of the target audience. According to Forrester's report on how [Customer-Centered Messaging Helps Boost B2B Revenues By Motivating Buyer Action](#), 88% of B2B marketers admit their homepages talk primarily about their companies, products, and services. So it's no wonder that 59% of global tech buyers agree that most vendor content is useless. In fact, any vendor's content — in any industry — will fail to provide value to prospects if it's not focused on the target audience's needs. Here's how you can avoid making the mistake.

Speak your audience's language.

Focus on your target audience's pain points, and frame your proof points in a way that's meaningful to them. This is a huge need: Only 28% of companies use the language of the target audience when developing content.

Don't be afraid to tug on emotions.

Most buyers don't feel that brand content is empathetic enough. The lack of emotional resonance is negatively impacting business results. The B2B Institute at LinkedIn found that "B2B strategies that appeal to emotions are [7x more effective](#) at driving long-term sales, profits and revenue than those just delivering rational messaging." The trick is to hook buyers with an emotional appeal that can be justified with logic. Use emotion to empathize with the buyer's plight, thrill them with a wow factor, or offer reassurance that the best fix is right around the corner.



Be direct and conversational.

Remember, it's people who make the decisions to buy your product or service, and they want to know that your brand is human and authentic. Here are tips for striking a conversational, yet professional, tone:

- **Speak simply:** While it's tempting to throw around big words and concepts, clear, concise language leaves no room for misinterpretation.
- **Ask questions:** When you ask questions, you start a two-way conversation.
- **Eliminate formalities, but don't be too informal:** You don't always need to write complete sentences, but don't use slang. Write as if you're talking to a friend.

5. Analyze & learn to optimize your campaigns

Sponsored Messaging is a great way to gain new, valuable insights about your prospects and customers at scale. In Campaign Manager, you can quickly pull performance data to evaluate which offers and content resonates with your audience.

With Conversation Ads, you get a bonus report which shows how many people click on your content and each of your offers, and how engaged they are in the conversation. Unlike website traffic analysis, with Sponsored Messaging, you don't need to infer or guess what your audience wants.

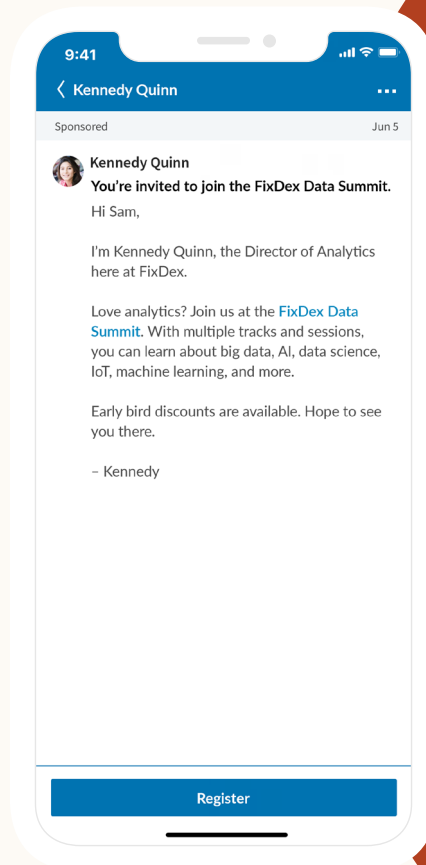


Pro tips

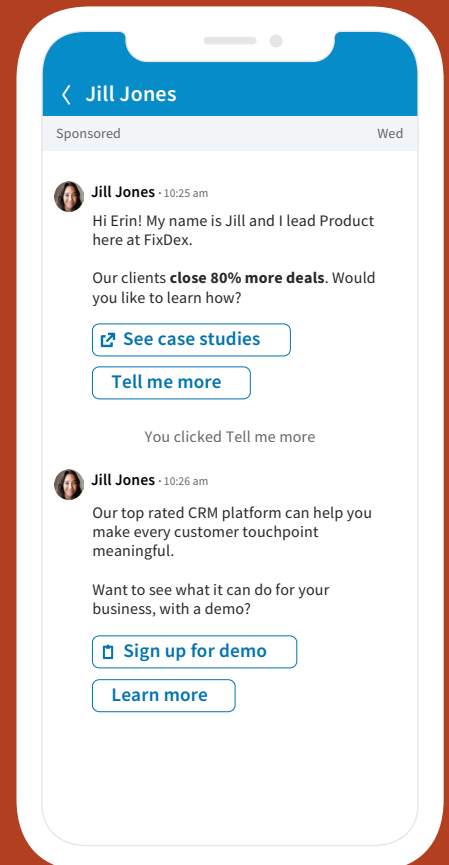
Qualify your prospects directly in your Conversation Ad by setting up specific questions and call-to-action responses to weed out unqualified prospects. Marketers who did this saw higher quality leads, and found it accelerates MQL to SQL conversion.

Nurture and build relationships with your unqualified leads. The marketing leaders we talked to underscored that even if the timing wasn't right for their offering, they kept their target audience engaged with alternative options in their Conversation Ads.

Best-in-class examples



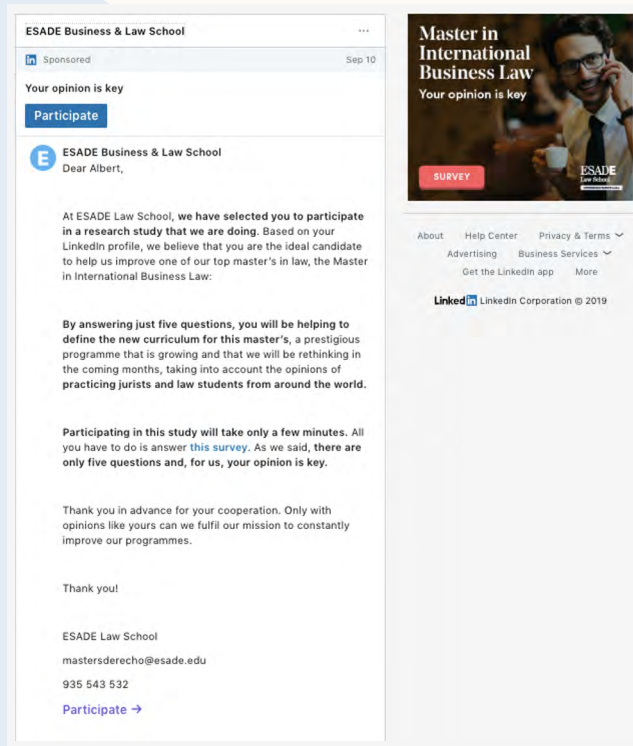
Message Ad



Conversation Ad

Businesses are leveraging Sponsored Messaging in a wide variety of ways. On the following pages, you'll find top examples to inspire your ad creatives.

Brand consideration and engagement



Esade

Esade is consistently ranked as one of the world's top academic institutions, with its master's in International Business Law ranked second in Spain by El Mundo. To keep pace with changing demand for education, Esade asked qualified professionals to help shape the development of the Masters of International Business Law.

How did they use Message Ads?

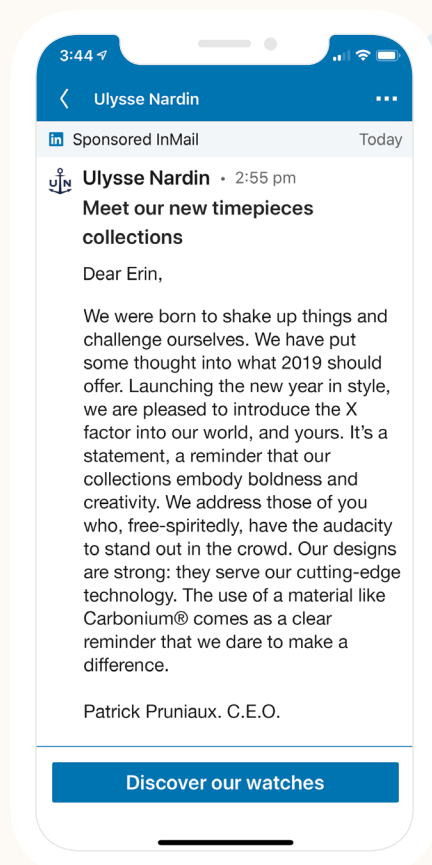
Esade reached out to well-qualified professionals on LinkedIn to help inform the development of the new master's degree – and connect to a pool of potential students. They crafted a personalized Message Ad explaining to their target audience why the school would value each LinkedIn member's input. Esade's campaign surpassed all targets for survey completions within 10 days, using less than 18% of their allotted budget.

Ulysse Nardin

The Salon International de Haute Horologie (SIHH) is a major showpiece event in the luxury watchmaking calendar and an opportunity for brands to launch new products and designs to an engaged audience. Ulysse Nardin, a luxury Swiss watch manufacturer, wanted to introduce new audiences to their brand and create a sense of affinity.

How did they use Message Ads?

Ulysse Nardin took a holistic approach, and leveraged both Sponsored Content and Sponsored Messaging to drive consideration and engagement. Using Sponsored Content's single-image ad, they showcased their new Freak X design through striking imagery. In tandem, they crafted a personalized Message Ad from the CEO Patrick Pruniaux, explaining the history of the Freak X design and the artistic inspiration behind it. The campaigns beat all expectations and luxury sector benchmarks.

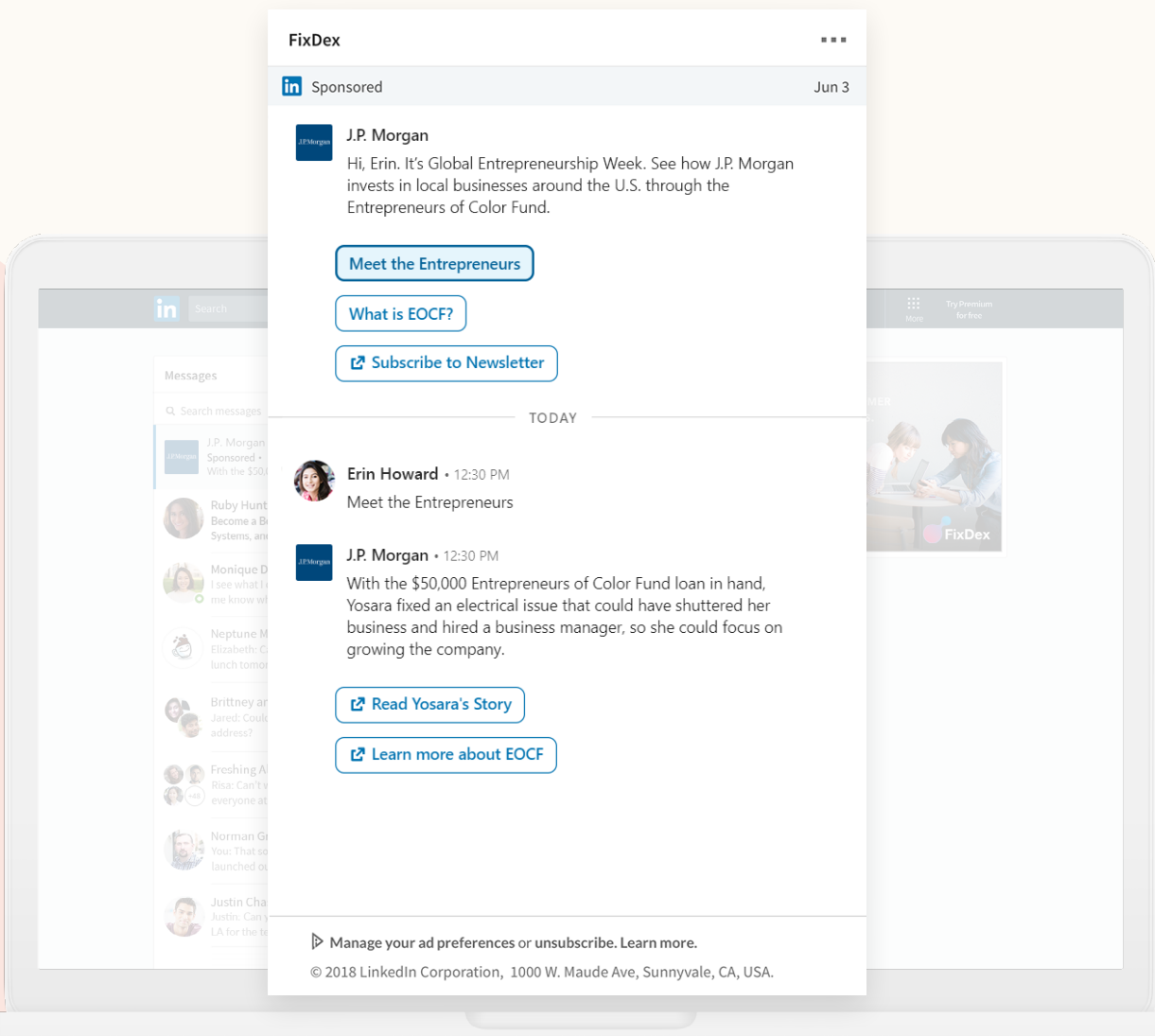


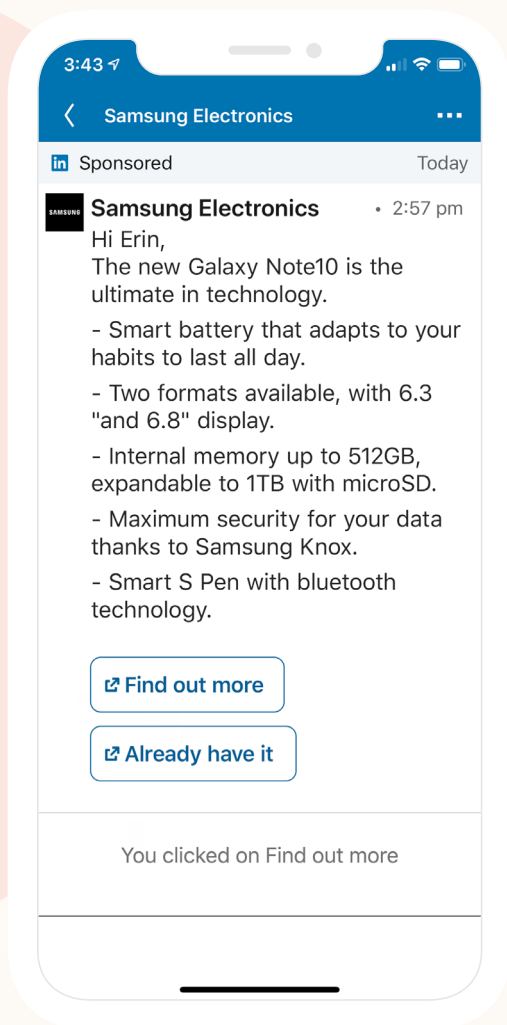
J.P. Morgan

J.P. Morgan is a global financial services firm servicing clients in more than 100 countries. J.P. Morgan sought to engage with leaders and founders during a global conversation about the value of entrepreneurship. The campaign featured inspiring success stories from clients and community partners to demonstrate the firm's support for innovators.

How did they use Conversation Ads?

To engage these key audiences in a two-way conversation, J.P. Morgan used Conversation Ads to allow users to learn more while staying in their LinkedIn Messaging. The ads closed on a strong call to action, such as “Subscribe to our newsletter” or “Watch the video” and received click-through-rates well above benchmark.





Samsung

Samsung Electronics is a global leader in technology, opening new possibilities for people everywhere. Through relentless innovation and discovery, they are transforming the world of TVs, smartphones, wearable devices, tablets, digital appliances, network systems, memory, system LSI, foundry and LED solutions. Samsung's goal was to excite the consumers about the innovative features of the Samsung Galaxy Note10 and advise the target to their website.

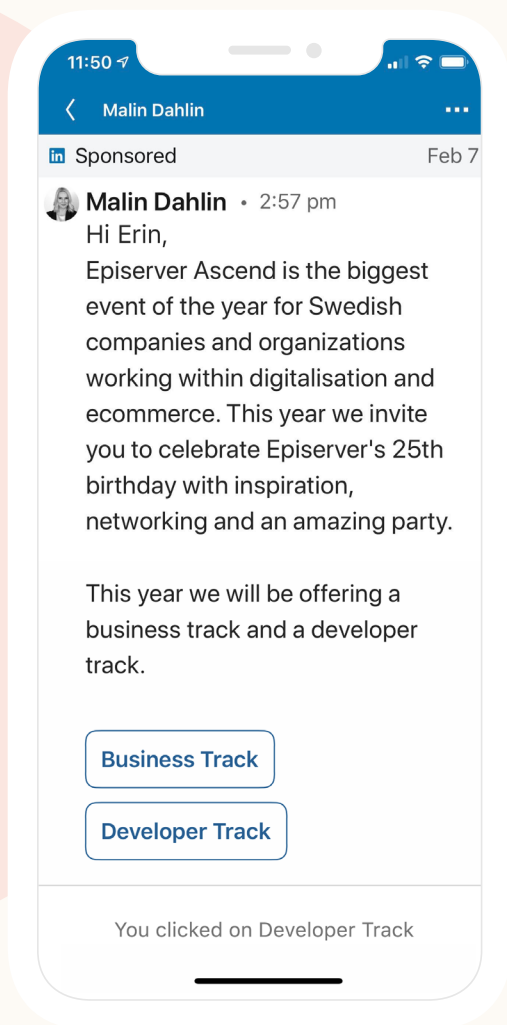
How did they use Conversation Ads?

Samsung showcased compelling features to get prospects to learn more about the Samsung Galaxy Note10, linking to their product landing page. Moreover, because they could qualify leads through these conversations, they could ensure a relevant experience for existing customers by providing a link to Samsung Galaxy Note10 accessories.

“Our main goal was to understand whether a Conversation Ad could effectively raise user engagement with our brand and our sponsored product Samsung Galaxy Note10. We are happy to say that this new format resulted in a 23% uplift of CTR compared to Message Ads, which demonstrate the format can be an effective way to communicate with our target audience. It also gave us precious insights on our products.”



Valerio Vidoni
Media Manager
Samsung Electronics Italia



Episerver

Episerver connects digital commerce and digital marketing to help organizations create unique digital experiences for their customers, with measurable business results. Their goal was to raise awareness for their biggest customer event, Episerver Ascend, and drive consideration.

How did they use Conversation Ads?

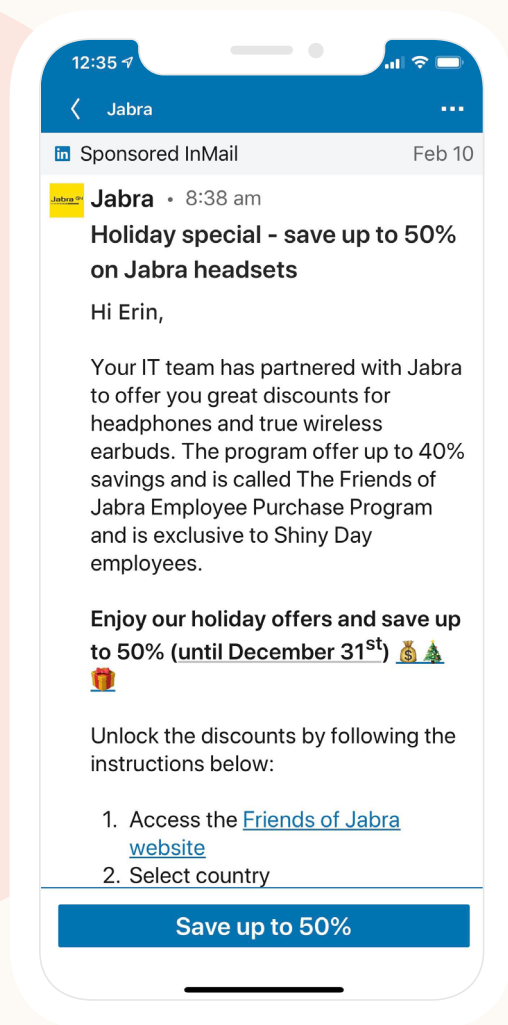
Episerver leveraged Conversation Ads to raise awareness about its biggest customer event for their Swedish market. In the conversation, recipients could choose to learn more about the two conference tracks: one for developers and one for business. With each option, prospects could click to see the event agenda or read a blog post laying out five reasons for why they should attend. Episerver highlighted that the biggest advantage of Conversation Ads is the ability to empower the target audience to choose information of interest rather than assuming or dictating what Episerver feels they should see.

“With Conversation ads, we managed to increase our audience engagement, while cutting our CPC in half. They allow us to offer our audience a variety of information in one attractive ad format – and without forcing them to leave the LinkedIn platform.”



Anne Gebhardt
Digital Marketing Manager
Episerver

Generate demand and leads



Jabra

Jabra is a global consumer electronics company. Their goal was to tune LinkedIn employees into a headphone discount — on LinkedIn!

How did they use Message Ads?

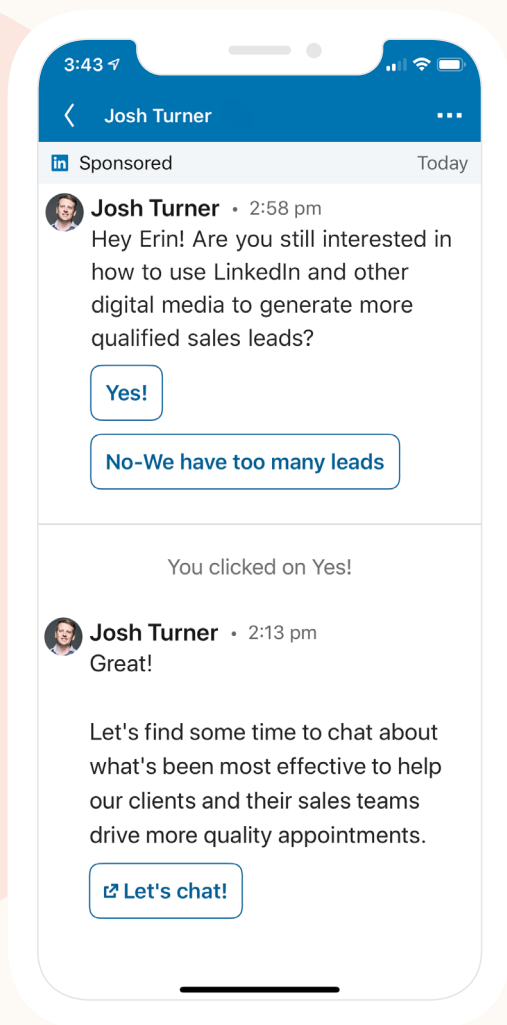
Message Ads was just one part of Jabra's Account-Based Marketing (ABM) strategy. Jabra targeted LinkedIn employees with Sponsored Content promoting its Friends of Jabra purchase program, complemented by Message Ads. The campaign drove a 1.58% CTR for LinkedIn employees registering with the program.

“Sponsored Content and Message Ads are a vital part of our ABM strategy and they deliver consistently for us. We often use them to target IT decision makers specifically. However, as this campaign showed, there's real value in driving awareness and engagement among a broad base of employees. It generates sales and also influences an organization's choices of which headset brand to buy.”



Andreas Villumsen

Account Based Marketing Manager,
EMEA, Jabra



LinkedSelling

LinkedSelling helps B2B companies capture hard-to-reach, high-value leads through LinkedIn marketing, phone and email. Their goal was to drive consultation sign-ups with new clients.

How did they use Conversation Ads?

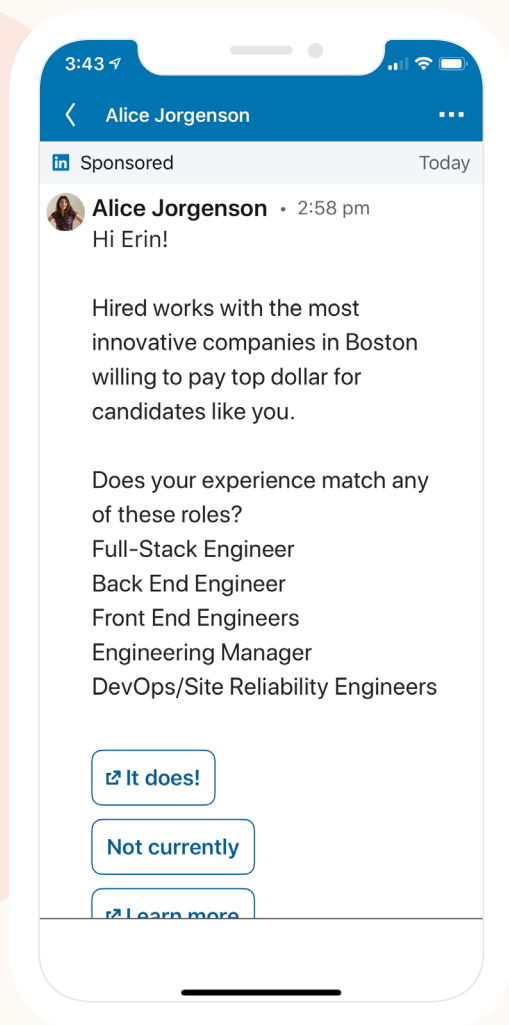
LinkedSelling crafted an engaging Conversation Ad that starts with a question. The sender in LinkedSelling's campaign started by asking the prospect if they are interested in generating more leads. If yes, the prospect is asked to sign up for a consultation. The tone of the conversation ad is friendly, helpful, and even lighthearted — such as offering a default response of “No, we have too many leads” — while putting the prospect's need front and center.

“Conversation Ads have provided us with another option to communicate in a highly personal way with our audience at scale. Our campaign has focused around using Conversation Ads to retarget our website visitors with a personal message that offers a next step with our company. We have seen a continued drop in our cost per booked appointment, but beyond the bottom-line results, we love the ability that Conversation Ads provides our team to build better relationships with their prospects. Rather than a one-sided message (as most ads are), we are able to engage our contacts in a much more meaningful way, leading to a stronger trust between our sales team and their leads.”



Pat Henseler

Director of Products
LinkedSelling



Hired

Hired, Inc. is a technology recruiting firm operating in a very competitive space. Because talented candidates are in high demand, especially at coveted positions, the firm's goal is to identify and reach new candidates. Hired is no stranger to Message Ads, which they've used to invite potential candidates to apply.

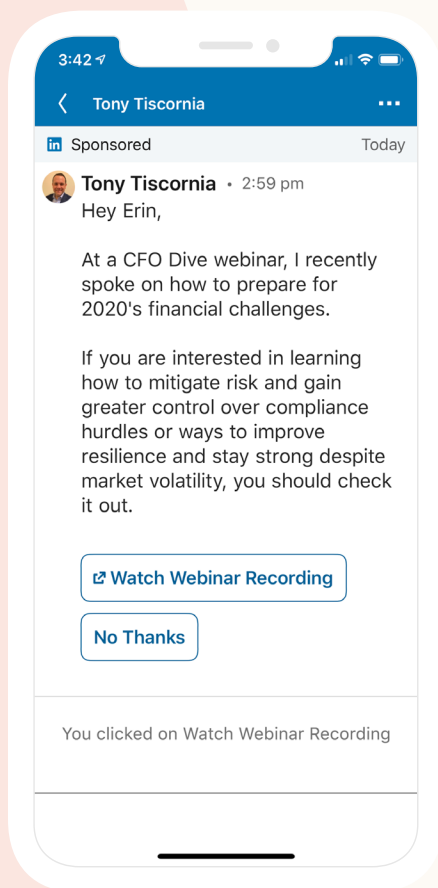
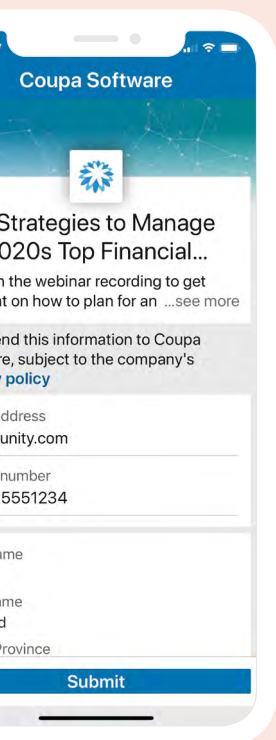
How did they use Conversation Ads?

Hired turned their ad engagements on LinkedIn from one-sided messages to two-sided conversations. They used simple yes-or-no questions to allow candidates to filter through different professional roles (e.g., "Do you match any of these roles?") and direct them to the right spot, whether a sign-up page or resource page. Hired's clickthrough rate increased 5x compared to previous Message Ads, and they saw a big uptick in quality candidates entering the system.

"You are making the ad more engaging to them. You're also providing more opportunities to click off. So you don't have just one exit; you have multiple exits that are potentially more personalized to them."



Chase Gladden
Growth Marketing Manager
Hired, Inc.



Coupa

Coupa provides a unified, cloud-based spend management platform that connects hundreds of organizations with millions of suppliers globally. The company's goal was to drive webinar registrations.

How did they use Conversation Ads?

Using Conversation Ads, Coupa invited its target audience to watch a recent webinar recording featuring Coupa's Chief Account Officer, Tony, discussing five strategies to manage 2020's top financial challenges. The laid-back invite comes from Tony himself, creating a personal touch. Prospects have the option to access the webinar instantly by submitting a Lead Gen Form. For those not interested in the webinar, Coupa provides additional information on its Business Spend Index, which indicates the macroeconomic health for the coming two quarters, providing a relevant experience.

“Conversation Ads are a great vehicle to engage our target audience in a personal and meaningful way. It provides the opportunity to serve up content that is of interest to them, and thus delivers a positive experience coming from the Coupa brand. We leveraged Conversation Ads to promote a live webinar, with the option to request access to an on-demand webinar as an alternative. We love that the members have the option to engage with Coupa in a way that fits their needs.”



Erin Triman

Senior Digital Marketing Manager
Coupa

UiPath is a global software company that develops a platform for robotic process automation (RPA). Their goal was to drive qualified leads and generate website traffic by sharing the latest Gartner Magic Quadrant report, which named UiPath as a leader in RPA.

“With Conversation Ads, our customers can find the exact information they want in a hassle-free way. Using LinkedIn’s reporting, we can map out the interactions and optimize our campaigns.”

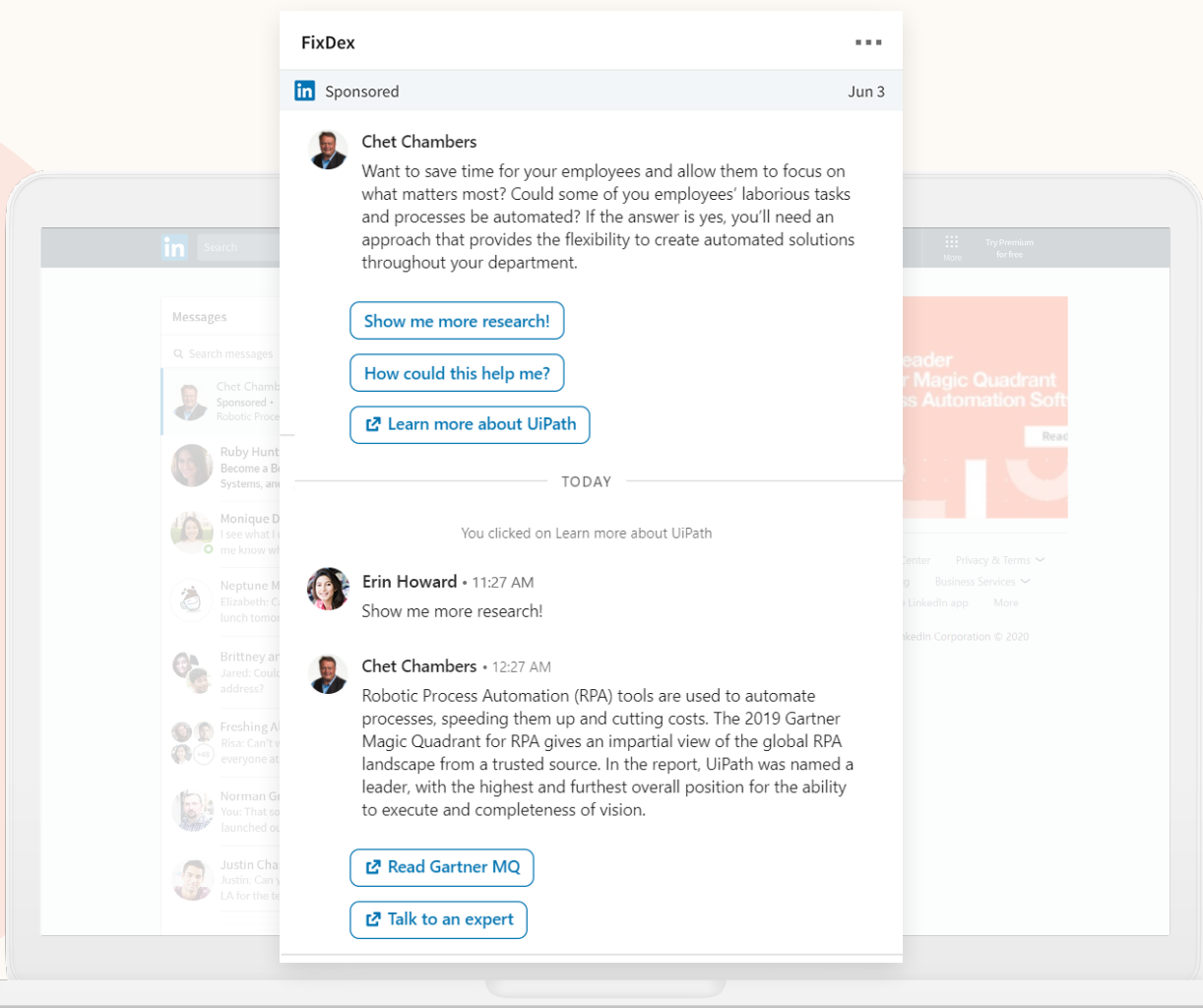


Maria Voloh

Director of Global Digital Marketing at UiPath

How did they use Conversation Ads?

UiPath offered multiple options to provide their target audience with the most relevant information. Their opening message led with the report, which linked to a LinkedIn Lead Gen Form, where prospects could seamlessly submit their information and access the content instantly. Prospects could also choose to learn more about the company or sign up to talk to a sales expert. By offering multiple options, UiPath was able to satisfy each prospect’s request and serve up the exact landing page that contained relevant information, creating a great member experience. Using our downloadable reporting, they were also able to understand the level of interest and engagement associated with each offer.

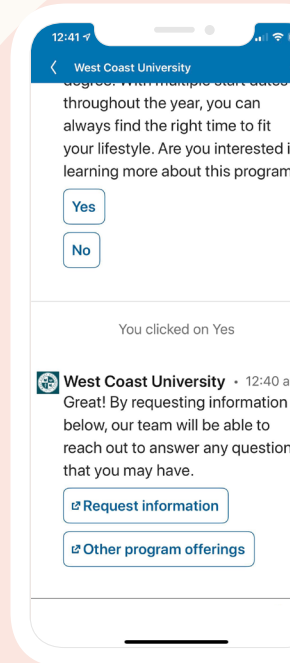
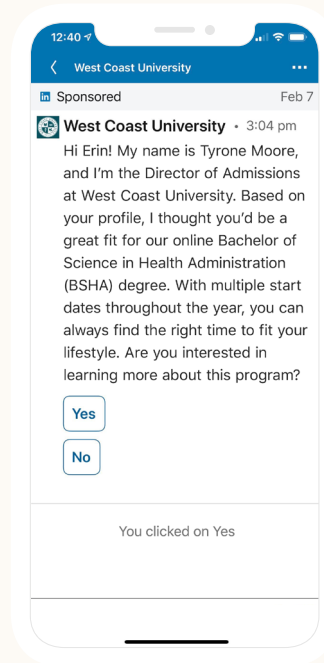


West Coast University

West Coast University offers online and on-campus healthcare and nursing programs to train healthcare professionals. WCU's goal was to drive consideration for its Bachelor of Science in Health Administration (BSHA) degree and, ultimately, drive program enrollment.

How did they use Conversation Ads?

WCU used Conversation Ads to personally invite their target audience to learn more about their programs. If prospects were interested in learning more, they could seamlessly submit their information and request through a Lead Gen Form, triggering an admission rep to reach out. WCU also weaved into the conversation the option to learn more about other programs, creating an engaging and relevant experience for each person no matter what their interest.

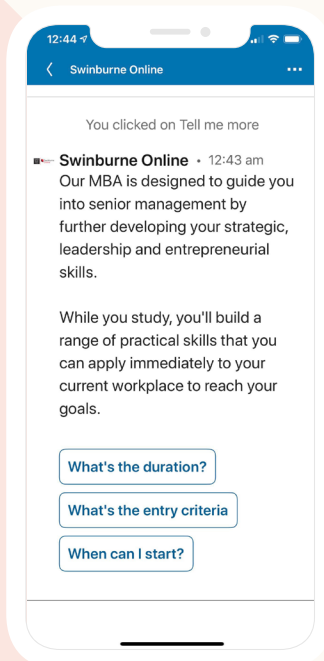
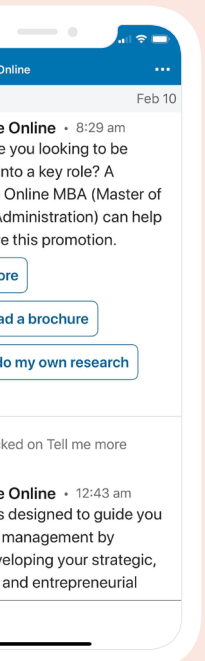


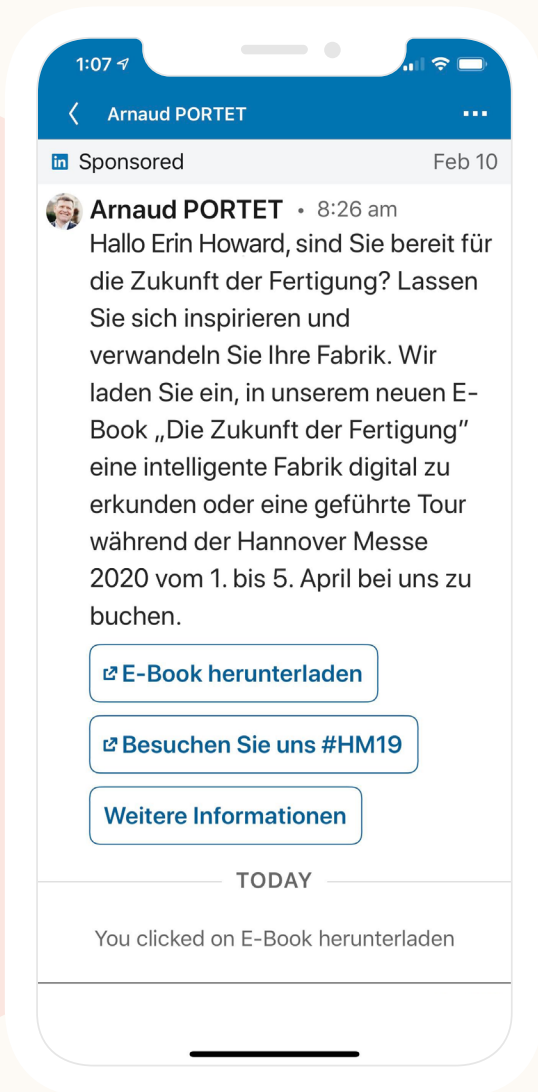
Swinburne Online

Swinburne Online provides internationally-recognised qualifications to students across a broad range of disciplines and study levels, ranging from short courses and undergraduate degrees, through to postgraduate courses. Through Conversation Ads, Swinburne Online aimed to increase the number of Master of Business Administration leads.

How did they use Conversation Ads?

Conversation Ads were created to promote the Swinburne Online MBA. They leveraged multiple LinkedIn macros, like first name and company, to personalise each message to each recipient at scale. In their opening, they asked prospects if they'd like to learn more about a specific program, also offering a brochure. Instead of sending prospects directly to a landing page, they offered more relevant information directly in the Conversation Ad such as entry criteria and program length. By offering various types of information, they were able to allow each prospect to do their own research before getting into contact with an admissions rep, creating a highly engaging and relevant experience. As a result, Swinburne Online was able to increase the volume of leads efficiently.





Dassault Systèmes

Dassault Systèmes, the 3DEXPERIENCE company, provides business and people with virtual universes to imagine sustainable solutions that help address manufacturing and production challenges. Their goal was to promote their thought leadership, highlight the business' presence at the event Hannover Messe, and generate high-quality leads.

How did they use Conversation Ads?

Dassault Systèmes wanted a strategic way to highlight their participation at Hannover Messe, one of the most important industry events of the year in manufacturing. In order to promote this to their target audience, they needed a way to keep the content engaging, even for those who weren't attending the event. To open the conversation reinforcing their subject matter leadership, they offered an eBook with insights around what the Industry Renaissance means for manufacturers.

As a second step, they proposed to meet them on the booth. They also offered more information about their company and mentioned that they'd like to connect at the event.

This conversation approach allowed the company to generate more than 30% of their leads at the lowest possible cost per lead across all platforms.

“The ability to present multiple CTAs within this format has increased possibilities to engage with the audience depending on their needs. We reached a CTR of 9.8%, which is 8 times higher than the LinkedIn Benchmark in the tech industry.”



Lucas Riedberger
Marketing Media Director,
Global, Dassault Systèmes



For the first time in the history of media, you can reach the world's professionals all in one place. Nearly 675 million people worldwide gather on LinkedIn to stay connected and informed, advance their careers, and work smarter. Together they comprise the largest global community of business professionals. These are the decision-makers, influencers, and the leaders of today and tomorrow — precisely the people you want to target.

For more information, visit marketing.linkedin.com.

Get started