Reach your audience:

Targeting on LinkedIn

LinkedIn

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Part I
Introduction

Targeting is a foundational element of running a successful advertising campaign — Getting your targeting right leads to higher engagement, and ultimately, higher conversion rates.

By advertising on LinkedIn, you are getting your message in front of the right person when they are most engaged, and you can reach a professional network of more than 610 million members strong by leveraging accurate first-party data at scale.

In this guide, you'll learn how targeting on LinkedIn works and the different ways LinkedIn allows you to market to those who matter most to your business. You'll also learn targeting tips and best practices that you can immediately apply to your campaigns.

Let's find your targeting sweet spot on LinkedIn.

Johanna Kimura
Product Marketing, LinkedIn

Steve Kearns
Content Marketing, LinkedIn

Part II

How LinkedIn Targeting works

LinkedIn targeting is differentiated because members are incentivized to keep their profiles accurate and up-to-date for networking, personal branding, and job opportunities. With LinkedIn, you can reach a quality audience composed of influencers, decision makers, and executives.

When members complete their LinkedIn profile, they provide information on their job experiences, company, skills, and more.

Danie

Location, IP	Seattle, Washington USA
School Field of Study Degree Graduation, Age	Boston University Communication Bachelor of Science 2011, 25-34
Company Size Industry	Simply Measured 51-200 employees Internet
Job Title Function, Seniority	Senior Marketing Manager Marketing, Senior Individual Contributor
Groups	CMA, LEWIS, Social Tools
Skills	SEO, Social Media, Digital Marketing, Blogging
Interests	B2B Marketing, Advertising Strategies, Digital Marketing

This means you can target members using profile-based demographic information, re-target visitors from your website, or upload lists of contacts or companies for your account-based marketing efforts. On LinkedIn, you can reach members using the following demographic targeting options:

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

Company
Company Connections, Company Followers, Company Industry, Company Name, and Company Size

Education
Degrees, Fields of Study, and Member Schools

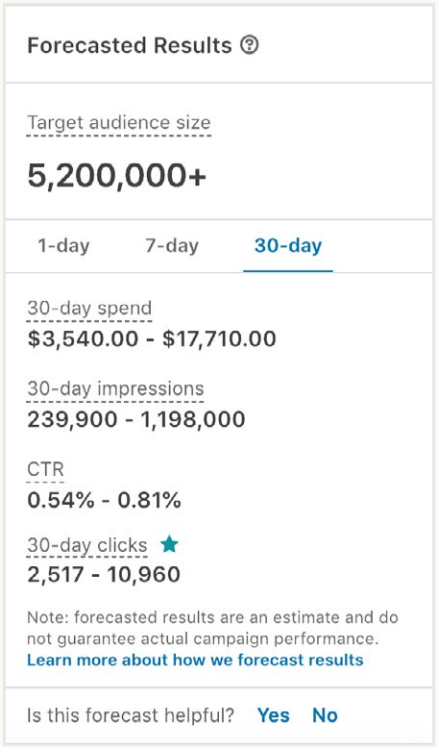
Interests
Member Interests and Member Groups

Demographics
Age and Gender

In the following sections, we'll walk you through what each of these options mean, how you can use them, and tips for pairing options together to create highly effective targeting combinations.

1. Estimating the size of your audience

The ***Estimated Audience Count*** displays the total number of LinkedIn members that fit your targeting options. In order to launch your campaign, you must target at least 1,000 members or 300 if you are using *Matched Audiences*. If your audience size is too small, you will be notified with an *Audience Too Narrow* message which prevents you from saving your targeting and moving to the next step. However, to have optimal scale for your campaign, aim for an audience size of 50k or more.



Tip:

When in doubt, start broad and then narrow down your audience after seeing what performs best. By using LinkedIn's demographic reporting, you can discover anonymized information on who is clicking and converting on your ads based on *Titles, Functions, Company Industries*, etc. (find out more on page 32).

2. Using different targeting options to reach your audience

Let's dive deeper into the ***Targeting Options*** you can use for your LinkedIn ad campaigns.

Tip:

When you choose multiple selections within a category, for example, *Seniority* levels of *Senior* and *Director*, Campaign Manager will target members that fall in either selection. When you choose selections between targeting categories, for example a *Seniority* level of *Senior* and a *Job Function* of *Finance*, Campaign Manager will target only members who fall into both categories

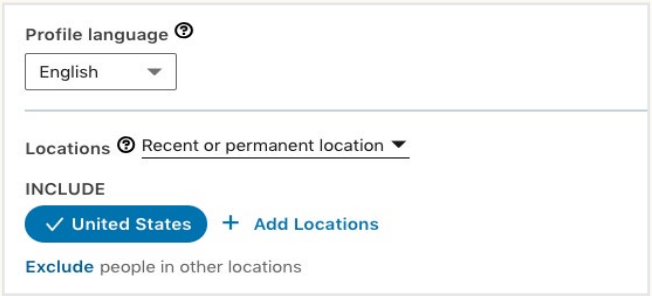
Location and Language

To get started, first define the ***Location*** and ***Language*** of the members you'd like to reach.

Location is the only mandatory field. A member's *Location* can be based on the *Location* included in their profile as well as their IP address.

A member's *Language* is based on the *Language* used in a members profile. Most often your ad copy should be in the language you select.

Once you've chosen your specific geographic *Location* and *Language*, we recommend you add no more than two additional options. This will improve the scale and reach of your campaign.

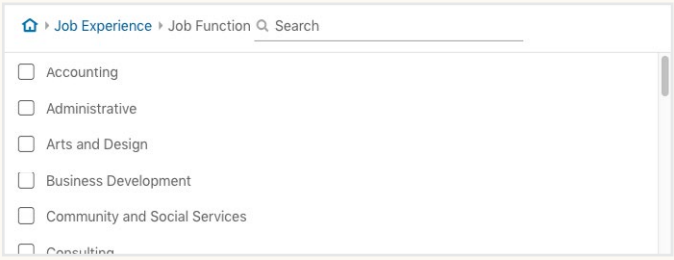


Theme 1: Experience

Job Function

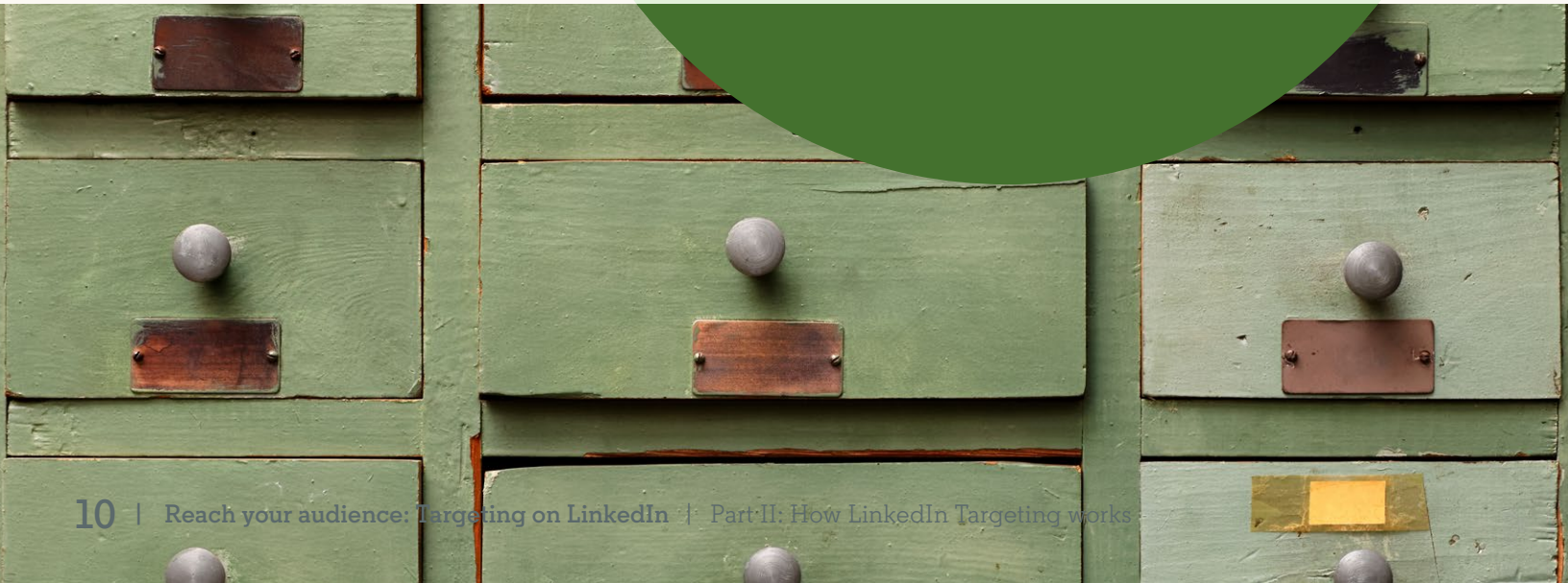
Job Functions are based on standardized groupings of the job titles entered by LinkedIn members.

For example, a doctor would fall under the *Medical* function along with members with similar occupations such as nurses, veterinarians, surgeons, and dentists.



Tip:

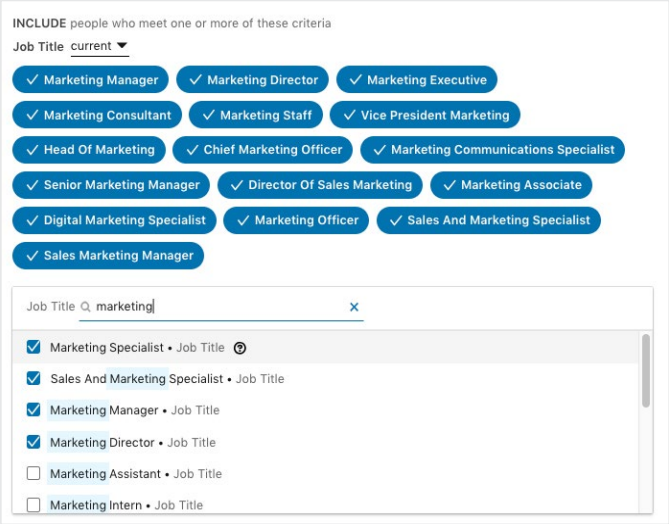
Combine the *Job Function* option with the *Seniority* option to reach decision makers with a specific expertise. For example, if you're looking to reach decision-makers in the IT function, try targeting the *Information Technology*, *Engineering*, and *Operations* functions and pairing that with a seniority targeting of *Senior*, *Manager*, *Director*, *VP*, *CXO*, and *Owner*.



Job Title

When members update their LinkedIn profile with a new role, these ***Job Titles*** are grouped by LinkedIn's algorithms and organized into standardized *Titles* you can use for your campaign targeting.

For example, though most engineers fall under the *Engineering* job function, you may want to target *Software Engineers* and *Petroleum Drilling Engineers* differently given they have a different set of skills.



Tips:

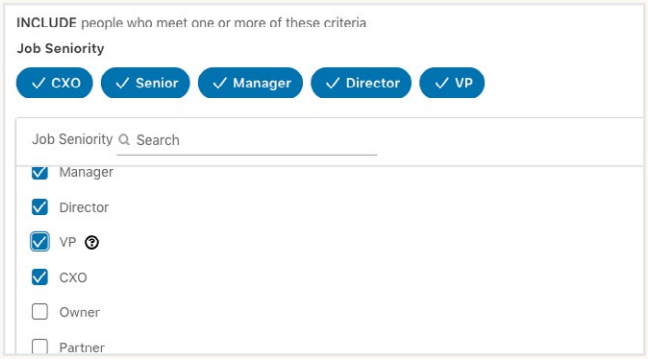
Avoid limiting your reach by targeting only a few titles. When you begin entering a title in the tool, Campaign Manager will auto-suggest other relevant job titles that you may want to add. Including all relevant titles will ensure your campaign has adequate reach.

In some cases, you can also broaden the scale of your campaign by targeting both current and past holders of a given *Job Title*. These members may have changed roles but still have a relevant skillset and be of interest to your business. Do this by selecting *current* or *past* in the *Job Title* dropdown.

Job Seniority

Job Seniority describes the rank and influence of a member's current role in their organization. This option is determined by a member's job title. For some campaigns, targeting by seniority can be an effective way to reach those with influence over a buying decision.

For example, a Senior Product Marketing Manager has a seniority of *Manager*, an Associate Consultant has a seniority of *Entry*, and a Doctor or Physician would be classified as a *Senior Individual Contributor*.



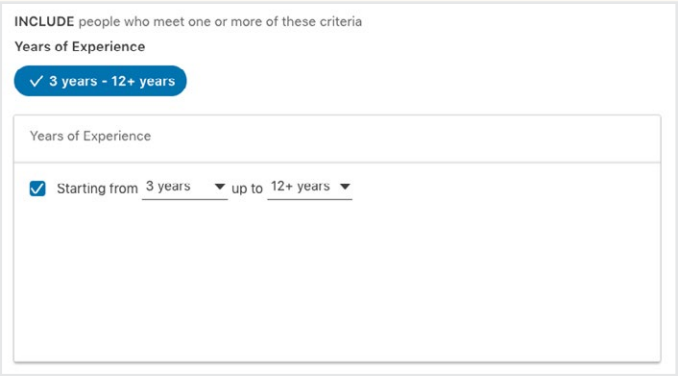
Tip:

Consider targeting *Senior Individual Contributors* (ICs). Increasingly, ICs have a large say in buying decisions. If you'd like to reach senior ICs with lots of experience, target them by choosing *Senior* and combine that with the *Years of Experience* option.

Owner	Has full or near full ownership of an organization
Partner	Has substantial partial ownership of an organization
CXO	Has direct reports and leadership responsibilities for the entire business function within an organization
Vice President	Executive management that has direct reports and leadership responsibilities for one business function or unit
Director	Multi-functional management that has direct reports and leadership responsibilities for multiple groups of individuals
Manager	Positions that have direct reports and leadership responsibilities for a single group of individuals
Senior Individual Contributor	Individual contributor positions that do not have direct reports but have leadership responsibility, advanced knowledge, and do not require immediate guidance
Entry	Individual contributors that do not have direct reports, no leadership responsibility, no advanced expertise and contribute without immediate guidance
Training	Students, interns and trainee positions that need immediate guidance to individually contribute.
Unpaid	Includes volunteer positions and positions that do not refer to a job

Years of Experience

Years of Experience *(YOE)* allows you to reach a target audience based on the years of professional experience they've accumulated over their career. LinkedIn calculates *YOE* by adding together the duration of each individual job experience a member has listed. However, we exclude any gaps in experience and also do not double count overlapping positions.



Tip:

Consider pairing *Years of Experience* with a *Seniority* level of *Senior* and above to reach experienced professionals with influence over the buying decision or prospects for an Executive MBA program. Other helpful combinations with *Years of Experience* include:

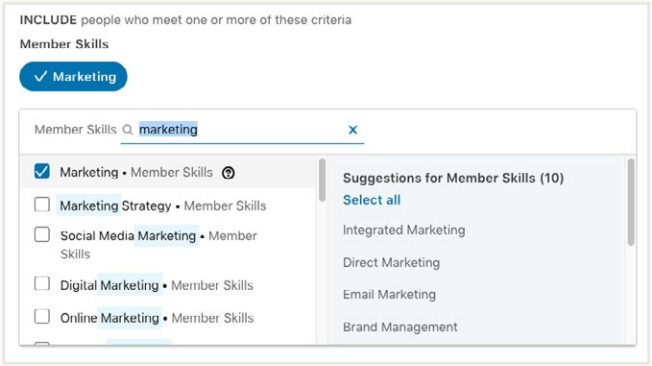
- *YOE + Degrees* = educated professionals who may be considering advanced degrees
- *YOE + Functions* = seasoned functional leaders
- *YOE + Skills* = skilled experts

Skills

Skills are highly relevant keywords found within a member's profile and skills section that indicate expertise in a particular area. *Skills* include those explicitly added by members in their skills section and also keywords and phrases mentioned throughout their profile and summary. LinkedIn uses modeling to infer skills from a member's job title and job description.

Skills targeting is an alternative way to reach professionals with a specialized expertise when *Job Title* targeting may not be as effective.

For example, if your business sells Project Management Software, *Job Titles* may not be as effective given several roles may have a need for project management software. However, *Skills* targeting allows you to target specific competencies that may span a broad range of job titles.



Tip:

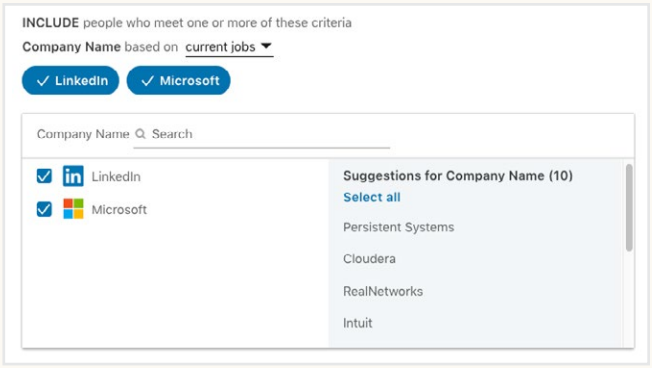
When using *Skills* targeting, consider pairing this with the *Function* or *Seniority* option. This helps to focus the reach of your offer on a more relevant audience.

Theme 2: Company

Company Name

Company Name is the organization a member lists as his or her employer. These are based on LinkedIn Pages, which are maintained by company employees.

Whether your campaign goal is awareness or retention, *Company Name* targeting allows you to focus your campaign on high-value accounts and reach decision makers across an organization.



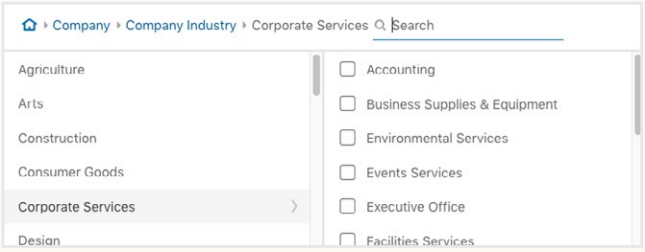
Tip:

You can target up to 100 different companies using the *Company Name* option. For those who'd like to target an even larger list of companies, Matched Audiences allows you to upload a list of up to 300,000 companies. Find out more on page 26.

Company Industry

Company Industry is a company's primary industry of operation. An organization may operate in many industries, however only the primary industry of operation as listed on their LinkedIn Page will be recognized.

Industry targeting allows you to narrow in on members who work in a particular sector. This is particularly effective if your offer is broadly applicable across an entire industry, for example, a piece of software geared towards the financial sector. However, when your offer is applicable across several industries, other targeting options may be more effective.



Tip:

Before utilizing *Industry* targeting, look at LinkedIn Pages from a few companies that fit your options to see which industry they fall under. Consider including all relevant industries in your targeting.

Company Size

Company Size allows you to reach members based on the size of the organization at which they work as listed on their Page. *Company Size* comes from the total number of inferred employees who work for an organization, not just the number of LinkedIn members who identify as working for a given company. *Company* Size allows you to effectively identify small and medium-sized businesses (1-200 employees) as well as enterprise organizations (500+ employees).

Tip:

Company Size is one of the options where excluding options works particularly well. For example, a startup that's making accounting software designed specifically with small businesses in mind could exclude 501-1000, 1001-500, 5001-10,000 and 10,001+ from their targeting. This ensures members who are on LinkedIn and work for an organization that has yet to create a LinkedIn Page are captured.

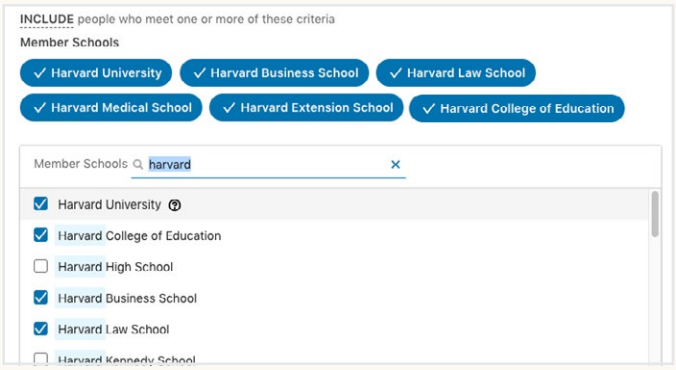
Theme 3: Education

Schools

You can target based on the ***School***, *College*, *University* or other learning institution where a member completed a course.

For example, an alumni association can use *Schools* targeting to reach alumni who may be interested in joining their association or donating.

While *Schools* targeting allows you to reach the right alumni or students at scale, targeting by *School* may also decrease your audience size since it isn't a required field when creating a LinkedIn profile. Check your estimated audience count to determine if you'll reach enough members.



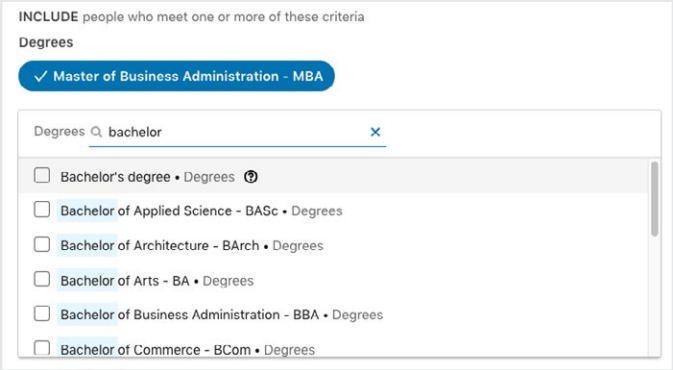
Tip:

Make sure you add all subsidiary *Schools* when trying to reach an entire college or university. For example, when advertising to Harvard students, be sure to add *Harvard University*, *Harvard Business School*, *Harvard Law*, *Harvard Medical*, etc. as they have separate school pages

Degrees

Degrees are recognized ranks granted by a college, university, or other learning institution. *Degrees* are grouped by LinkedIn algorithms and organized in standardized *Degrees* you can use for your campaign targeting.

Choosing to target by *Degrees* can sometimes limit your audience size as the *Degrees* field is not always populated by members.



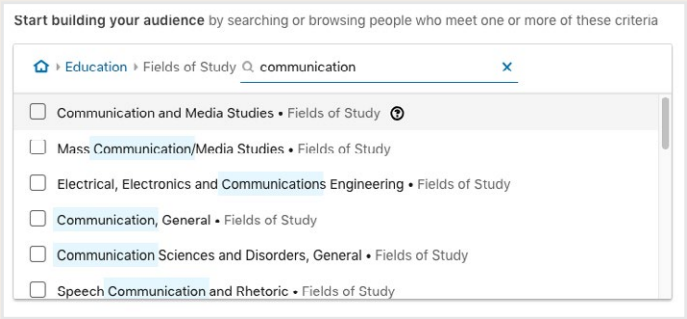
Tip:

Education-based organizations can use *Degrees* targeting to reach members who might be interested in furthering their studies through additional courses or programs. For example, if you're advertising an enrollment offer for an advanced degree program, you could exclude those who already have a master's degree. Layering *Degrees* targeting with *Job Function* (ie. finance, accounting, IT) is a common way to reach audiences who would be most interested in a specific type of educational degree.

Fields of Study

Field of Study is the major or area of study within a member's degree. For example, those with a *Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)* may have a major in either *Accounting* or *International Business*.

For some campaigns, *Field of Study* can be used as a proxy for skills or expertise in a given field, especially for recent graduates.

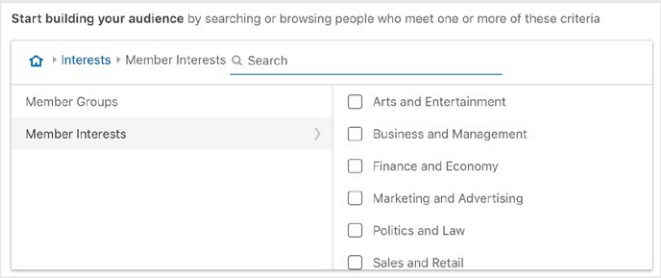


Theme 4: Interests

Interest

Interest categories reach people based on the content members engage with on LinkedIn and the B2B topics they search for on Bing.

Interest targeting is an effective way to reach a range of members based on topics or categories they're interested in most and is most effective for campaigns with awareness and consideration objectives. *Interest* targeting can also help you reach a unique set of audiences when other targeting options are too narrow.



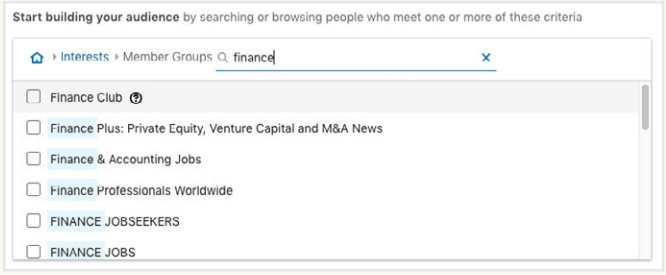
For example, if you're looking to reach people with an *Interest* in *Business Travel*, *Skills* targeting may not be as effective as it would reach those who have that skill listed on their profile (e.g. Travel Agents). However, *Interest* targeting allows you to reach an audience with an interest in the topic (e.g. Corporate Executives or Consultants who travel for work).

Tip:

When using *Interest* targeting, consider pairing this with *Function* or *Seniority*. This helps focus your content to a more relevant audience.

Groups

Groups on LinkedIn are places where members who share interests or professional associations can gather, discover new information, and ask questions. These *Groups* often times suggest expertise in a given area.



For example, for those looking to reach Finance professionals, relevant *Groups* may include the *Finance Club* (840,000+ professionals), *Banking Careers* (500,000+ professionals), or *Finance Plus: Private Equity*, *Venture Capital* and *M&A news* (440,000+ professionals).

Tip:

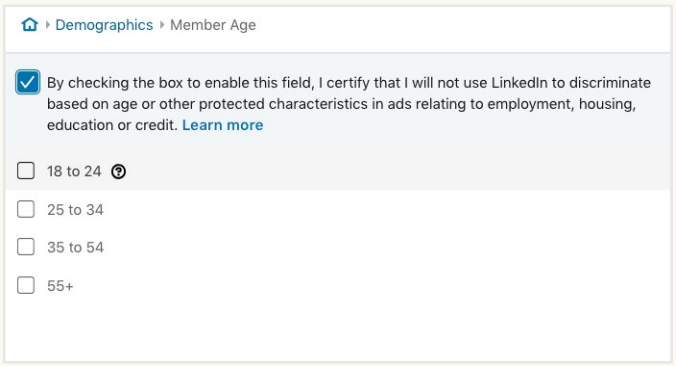
Use the search function on the LinkedIn homepage to find relevant groups. The larger and more active groups will typically appear at the top of the list.

Theme 5: Demographics

LinkedIn's professional targeting options make it easy to reach a high-quality audience and can lead to much stronger results for your campaigns. However, LinkedIn also offers *Demographic Targeting* options such as *Age* and *Gender*.

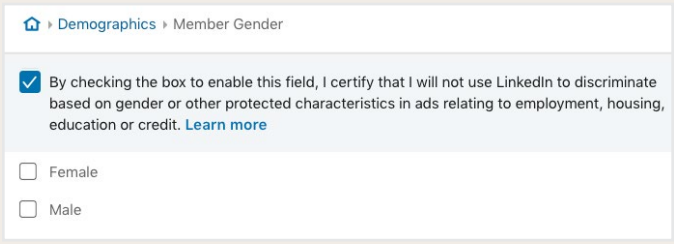
Age

Age is an estimation of how old a member is likely to be based on their first graduation date. Not everyone on LinkedIn includes a graduation year on their profile and therefore including *Age* may substantially reduce your audience size.



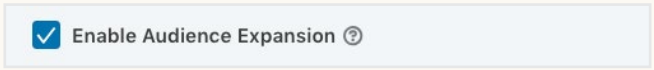
Gender

Gender is a determination of whether a member is female or male and inferred based on a member's name. Similar to *Age*, using *Gender* targeting will also reduce your audience size by potentially 50% or more. As LinkedIn does not require members to disclose their gender, we recommend utilizing professional targeting option wherever appropriate.



3. Using Audience Expansion and Lookalike audiences to reach similar audiences

Audience Expansion and ***Lookalike audiences*** deliver your content to members who are similar to your target audience in their *Demographics* and *Interests*. This increases the scale and reach of your campaign by delivering your ad to additional members who may be interested in your content.



When to use *Audience Expansion* vs *Lookalike audiences*:

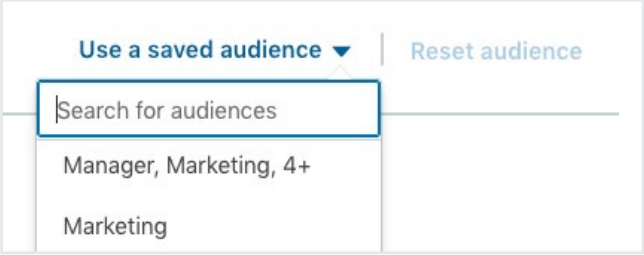
- When you already have a high-performing audience - either from people visiting your website, people who provided you their email or a tailored account list, *Lookalike audiences* can find you more people who look like these individuals or companies.
- When you are using profile-based demographic targeting, *Audience Expansion* can help reach similar audiences to your selected options

Tip:

If you exclude any options, *Audience Expansion* will honor these exclusions. To avoid reaching a certain type of member while using *Audience Expansion*, be sure to exclude their targeting options. For example if you do not want to target the *Unpaid* seniority level, exclude *Unpaid* and *Audience Expansion* will ensure that no expanded audience members are *Unpaid*.

4. Saving your audience as a template for other campaigns

Defining your audience takes time, especially for people who manage several campaigns. Speed up this process by saving your audience as a template and then re-using your audience for another campaign later on. You can apply that template to future campaigns across any of your accounts.



Piecing it all together

Let's now apply what you've learned to a real-world example. How would you use targeting on LinkedIn to reach a buyer persona represented by our savvy tech marketer, ***Marie***?

***Marie* is a marketer in the technology industry at a small to mid sized company with marketing-related skills such as demand generation, SEO, social media, and project management.**

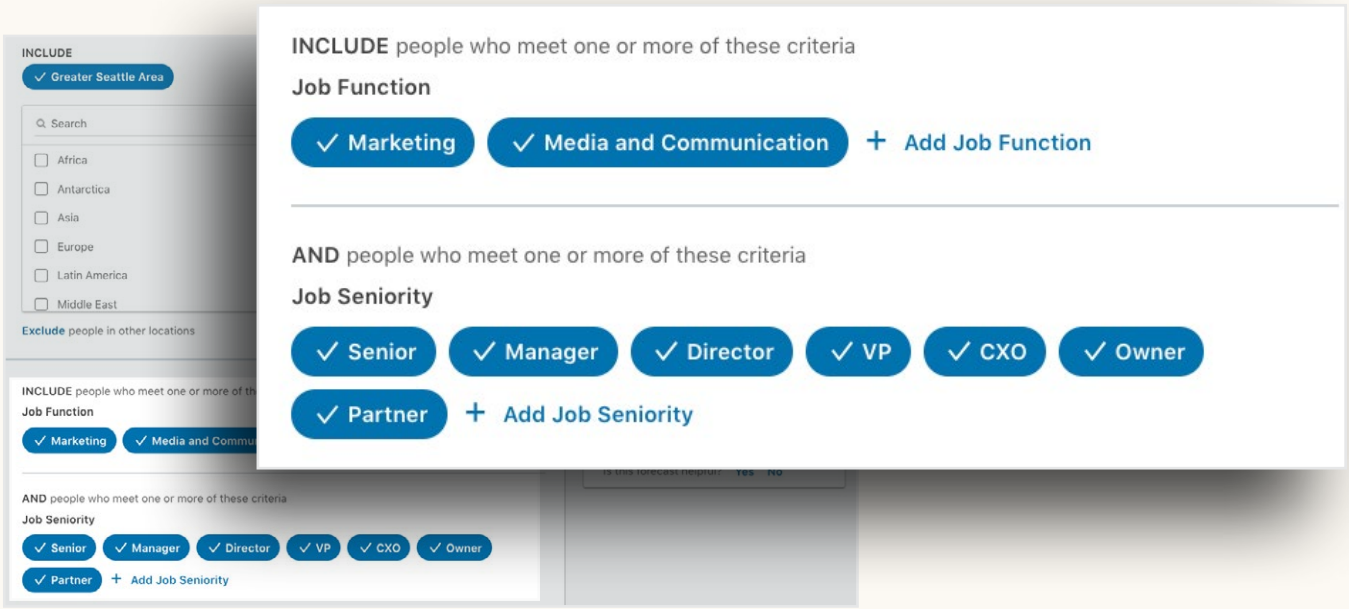
There are several ways to reach members like Marie using LinkedIn's targeting options - the key is to be creative and adopt an "always testing" mindset. We recommend running a few campaigns with various targeting option combinations to reach your audience. Again, we recommend starting broad and seeing what works for you.

To reach Marie, consider some of the sample campaign targeting below.

Campaign 1:

Targeting by Job Function and Seniority

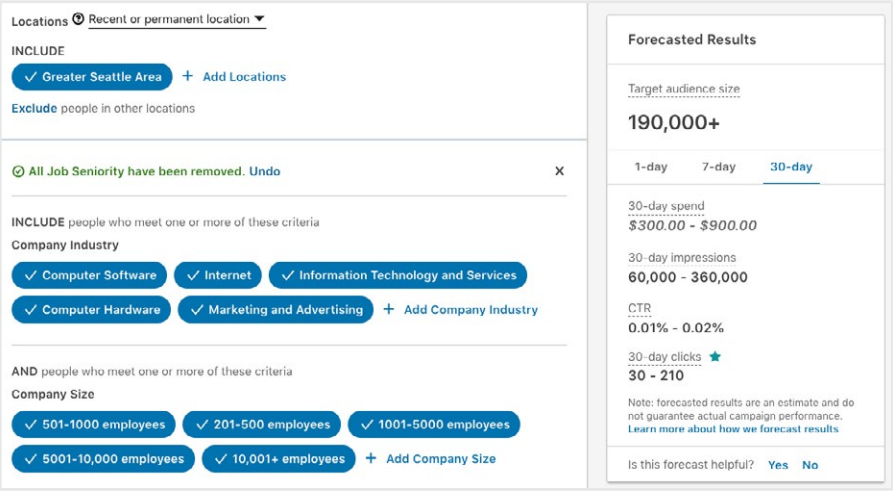
Job Function: Marketing, Media & Communications
Seniority: Senior, Manager, Director, VP, CXO, Partner, Owner



Campaign 2:

Targeting by Company Industry and Company Size

Company Industry: Computer Software, Internet, Information Technology and Services, Computer Hardware, Marketing and Advertising
Company Size: Exclude: 201-500, 501-1000, 1001-5000, 5001-10,000, 10,000+



"LinkedIn for me has always been one of those weapons in your arsenal that you have to have. We didn't know we would be able to drive down to the pursuit marketing level to the degree that we did. There is something here that is extremely difficult for other platforms to replicate. They've been an amazing partner through all of this, extremely flexible, and a very powerful tool. I truly believe in my heart it's a no-brainer."

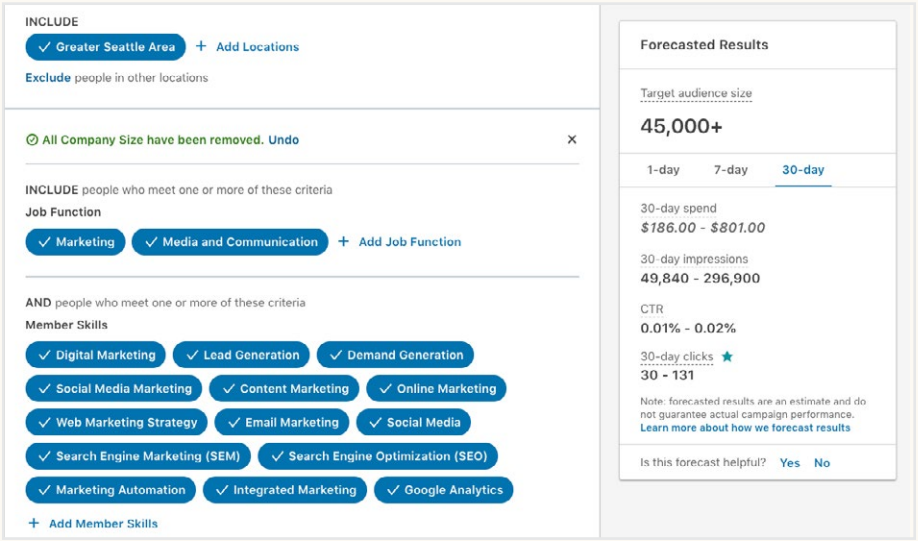
Nick Panayi
Head of Global Brand & Digital Marketing, DXC Technology

Campaign 3:

Targeting by Job Function and Skills

Job Function: Marketing, Media & Communications

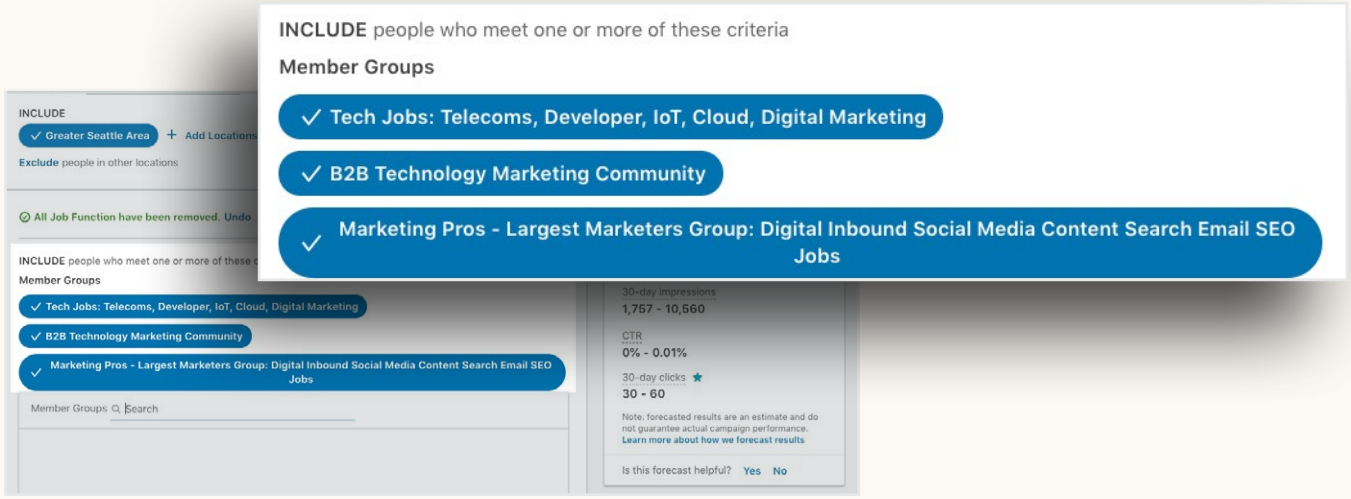
Skills: Digital Marketing, Lead Generation, Demand Generation, Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Online Marketing, Web Marketing Strategy, Email Marketing, Social Media, SEM, SEO, Marketing Automation, Integrated Marketing, Google Analytics



Campaign 4:

Targeting by Groups

Groups: Marketing Pros - Largest Marketers Group: Digital Inbound Social Media Content Search Email SEO Jobs, Tech Jobs: Telecoms, Developer, IoT, Cloud, Digital Marketing, B2B Technology Marketing Community



Part III

More customized options with Matched Audiences

In addition to rich *Demographic Targeting*, *Matched Audiences* helps you engage key accounts, prospects, and customers that matter most to your business with:

- Website Retargeting
- Contact Targeting
- Account Targeting

You can now use LinkedIn to retarget your website visitors, market to your known contacts from your databases and marketing automation platforms, and reach decision makers at target companies for your account-based marketing programs.

Website Retargeting: Re-engage your website visitors.

Target your website visitors with LinkedIn ad campaigns by adding the LinkedIn insight tag to your web pages, such as your homepage or contact us page. With *Website Retargeting*, you can create audiences based on the pages they visit on your website and recapture your visitors' interest with content relevant to the pages they viewed.

Learn how to get started with Website Retargeting.

Tip:

Website Retargeting uses the same insight tag as *LinkedIn Conversion Tracking*. So if you already have an insight tag on your website, you can quickly get up and running.

Account Targeting: Reach decision makers at your target accounts

With *Account Targeting*, you can run account-based marketing (ABM) campaigns by matching your target companies against the 8+ million LinkedIn Pages. Combined with LinkedIn's *Demographic Targeting*, *Account Targeting* allows you to guide decision makers along their buying journey and ultimately drive sales and qualified leads.

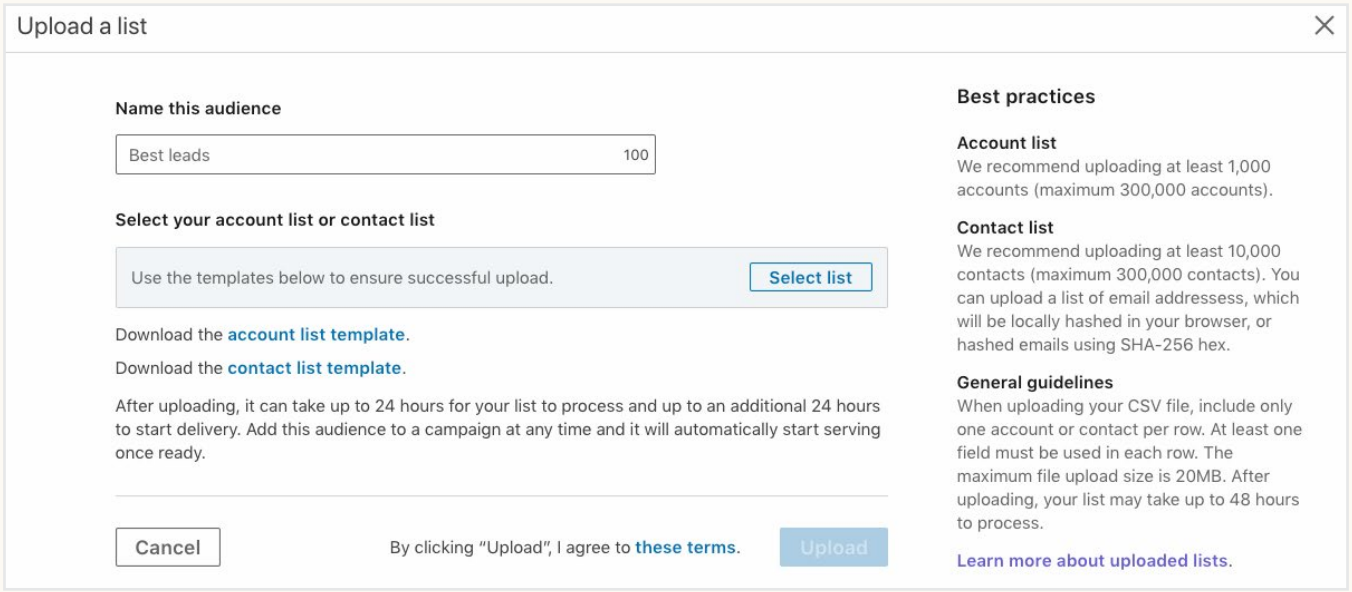
Learn how to get started with Account Targeting.

Tip:

When using *Account Targeting*, you can include filters for *Company Industry* or *Company Size* in order to segment your account list.

Contact Targeting: Integrate or import your contact lists

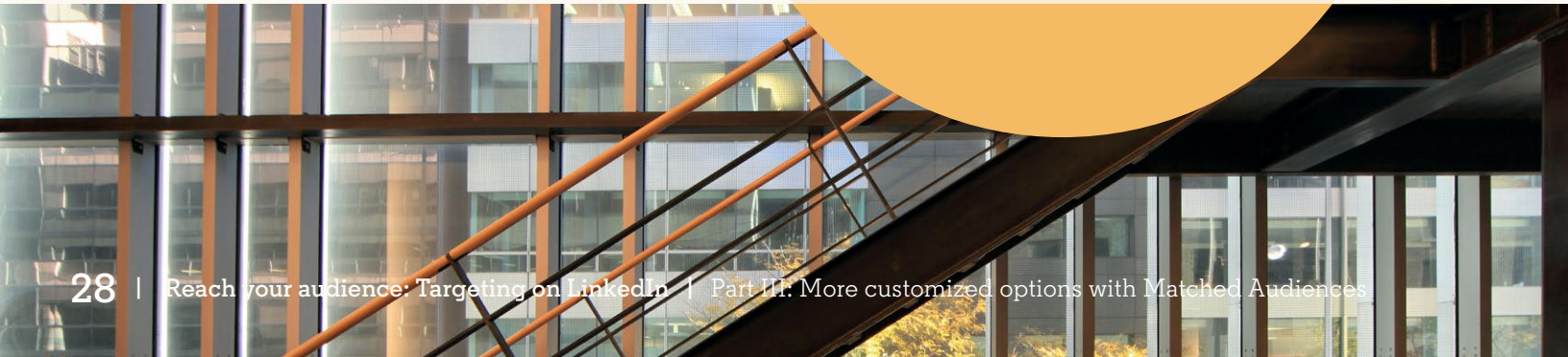
Contact Targeting allows you to build a customized audience by connecting your contact management platform or securely uploading a list of email addresses. At this time, LinkedIn supports data integrations with Marketo, Eloqua, Liveramp, Salesforce, Pegasystems and Microsoft Dynamics, however new partners are added frequently. Alternatively, you can upload a CSV file with a list of email addresses directly into Campaign Manager.



Learn how to get started with Contact Targeting.

Tip:

With *Contact Targeting*, you can deliver ads to a list of leads based on their stage in your sales funnel. You can also exclude a list of current customers from your prospecting campaigns.



Part IV

Tips to optimize your targeting strategy

Now that you've learned about the different ways you can target your ads in Campaign Manager, you'll want to know how you can optimize your targeting strategy to ensure you're getting the most out of your campaigns.

Here are four important LinkedIn targeting do's and don'ts to get you started:

DON'T

Lump all of your buyer personas into one campaign.

You'll likely see poor campaign performance if you use just one campaign to target professionals in different countries, from different continents, and in unrelated industries and functions. If your target audiences are all lumped together, you'll have trouble personalizing your content for each stakeholder group.

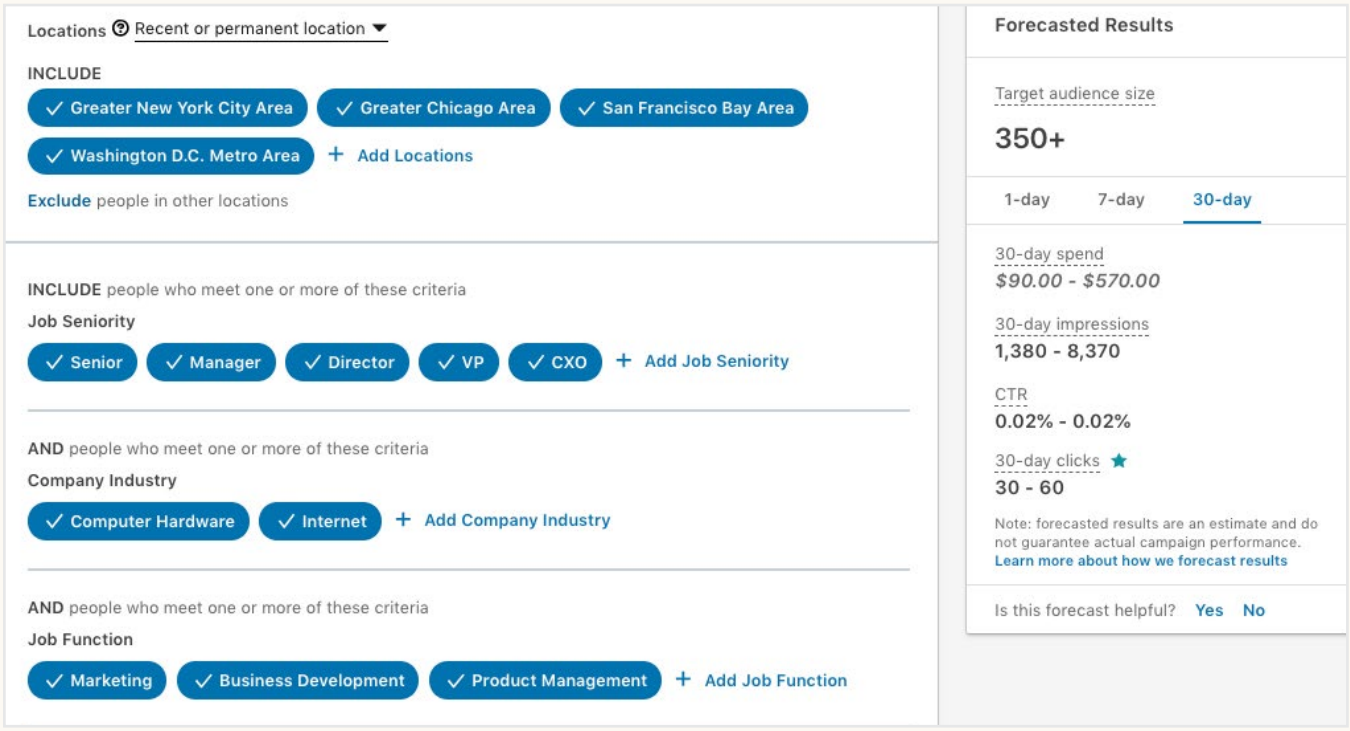
DO

Make sure your buyer personas are clear and well-defined.

Break out key personas into separate campaigns and group together the options that makes sense, including related industries, geographies and job functions. This will help you deliver the right messaging to a specific subset of LinkedIn members.

DON'T
Hyper-target your campaigns.

It's tempting to use every targeting feature possible. However, limited scale will hurt your campaigns.



DO
Add only two or fewer additional targeting options in addition to the Location option.

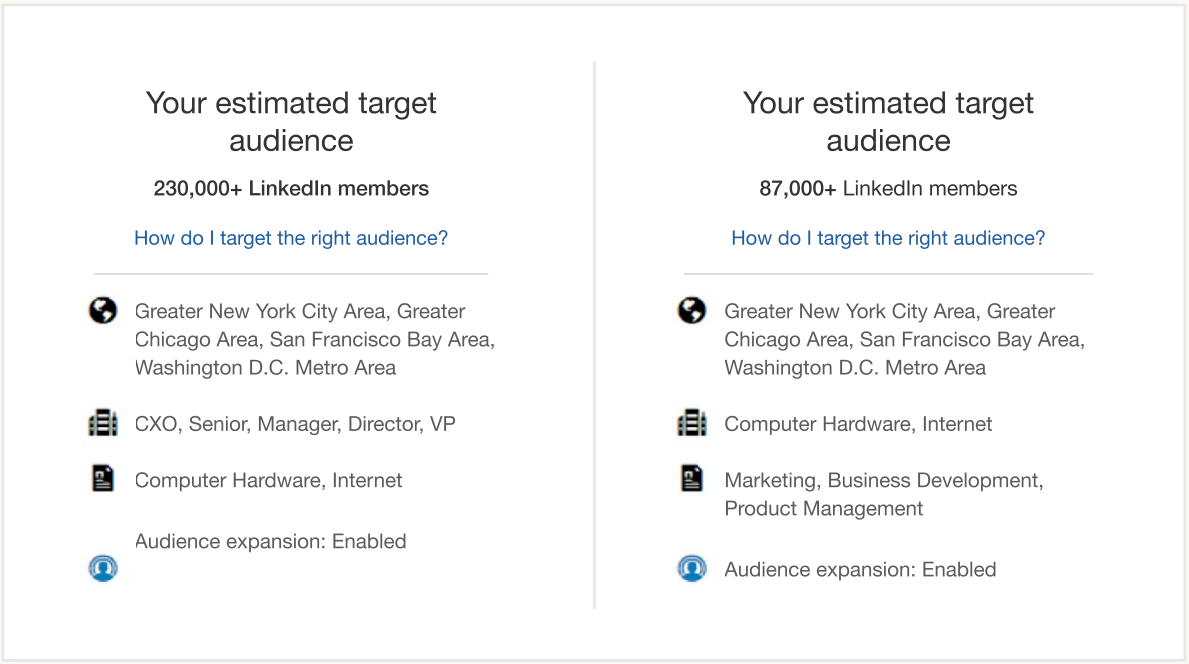
We recommend the following audience sizes for LinkedIn's advertising products. Keep in mind, there's no one size fits all recommendation which is why testing is crucial.

Sponsored Content: 300,000+ members
Text Ads: between 60,000 and 400,000 members
Sponsored InMail: 100,000 or fewer members

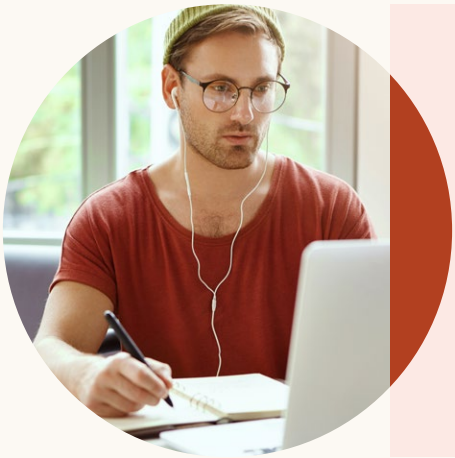
A/B Testing Your Targeting

Once you've set a campaign live and you begin to see results, optimize your targeting to ensure you're reaching your audience most effectively.

A/B Test Your Targeting. By testing two similar campaigns with one small variation in your targeting options, you can see which combination is more effective. To perform an A/B test on your targeting, create a campaign, duplicate it, and then slightly alter your targeting parameters.



Try testing *Interests* versus *Job Titles*, *Industry* versus *Function*, etc. Keep refining over time, and you'll find the audience that responds best to your content.

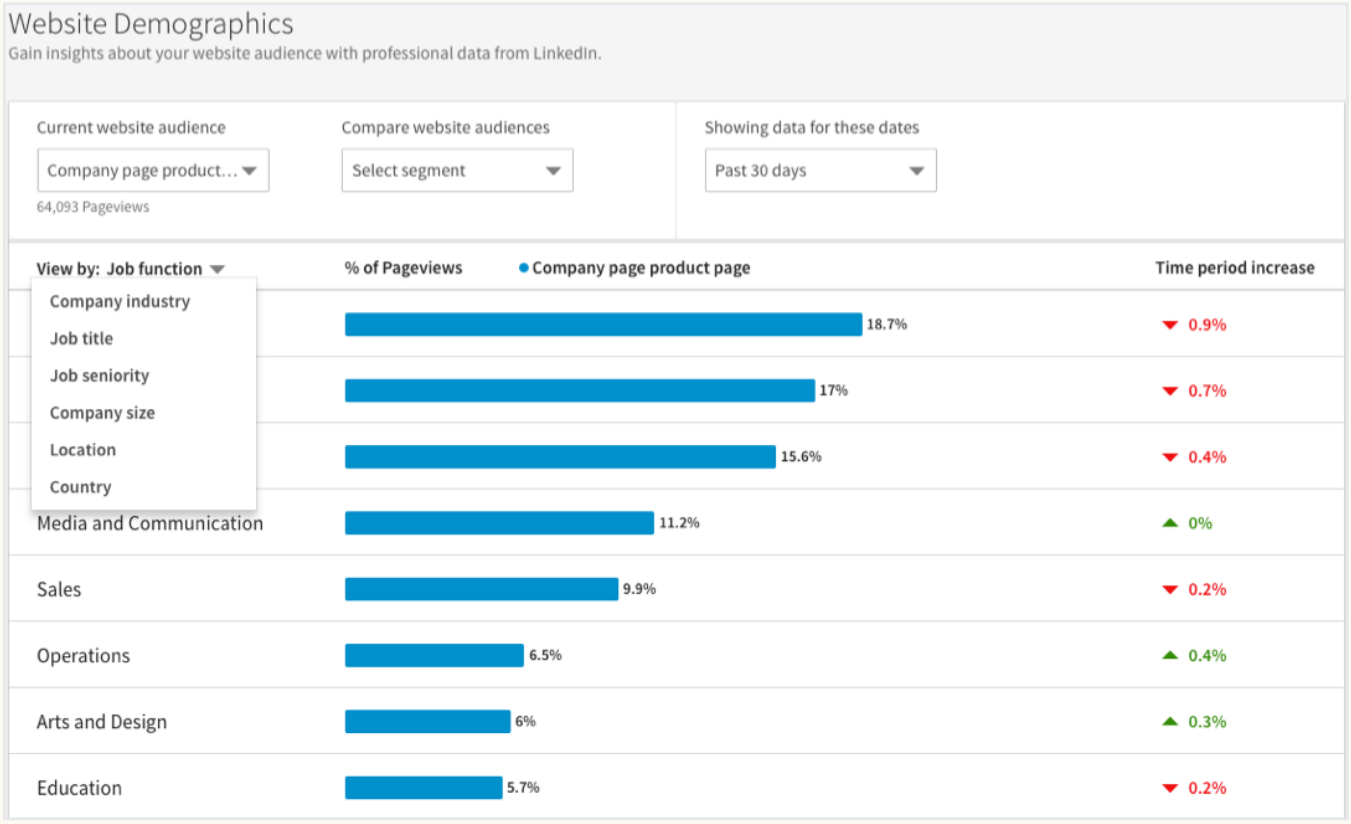


Tip:

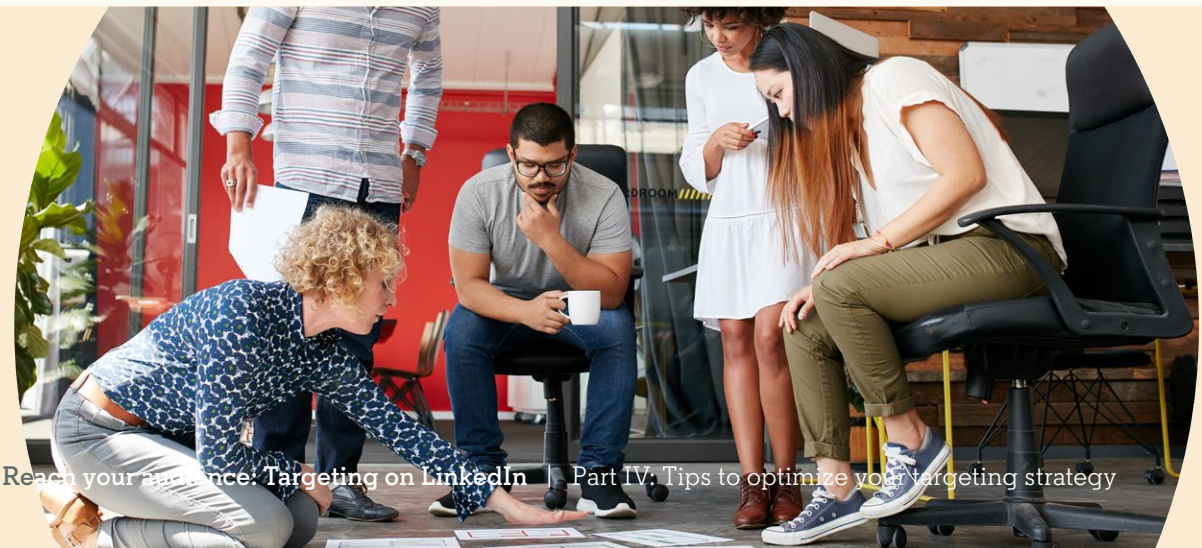
Change only a few options at a time to isolate what part of your test impacted your campaign's performance.

Use demographics reporting to analyze your audience.

Available in your account dashboard, demographics reporting enables you to optimize the targeting of your campaigns with information on who's responding to your offer.



After you have accumulated enough campaign data, demographic reporting provides detailed insights about the professionals who have clicked on your LinkedIn ads broken down by *Job Title*, *Job Seniority*, *Company Industry*, *Job Function*, *Company Size*, and *Location*. This will enable you to see how your content is performing with different subsets of your audience.



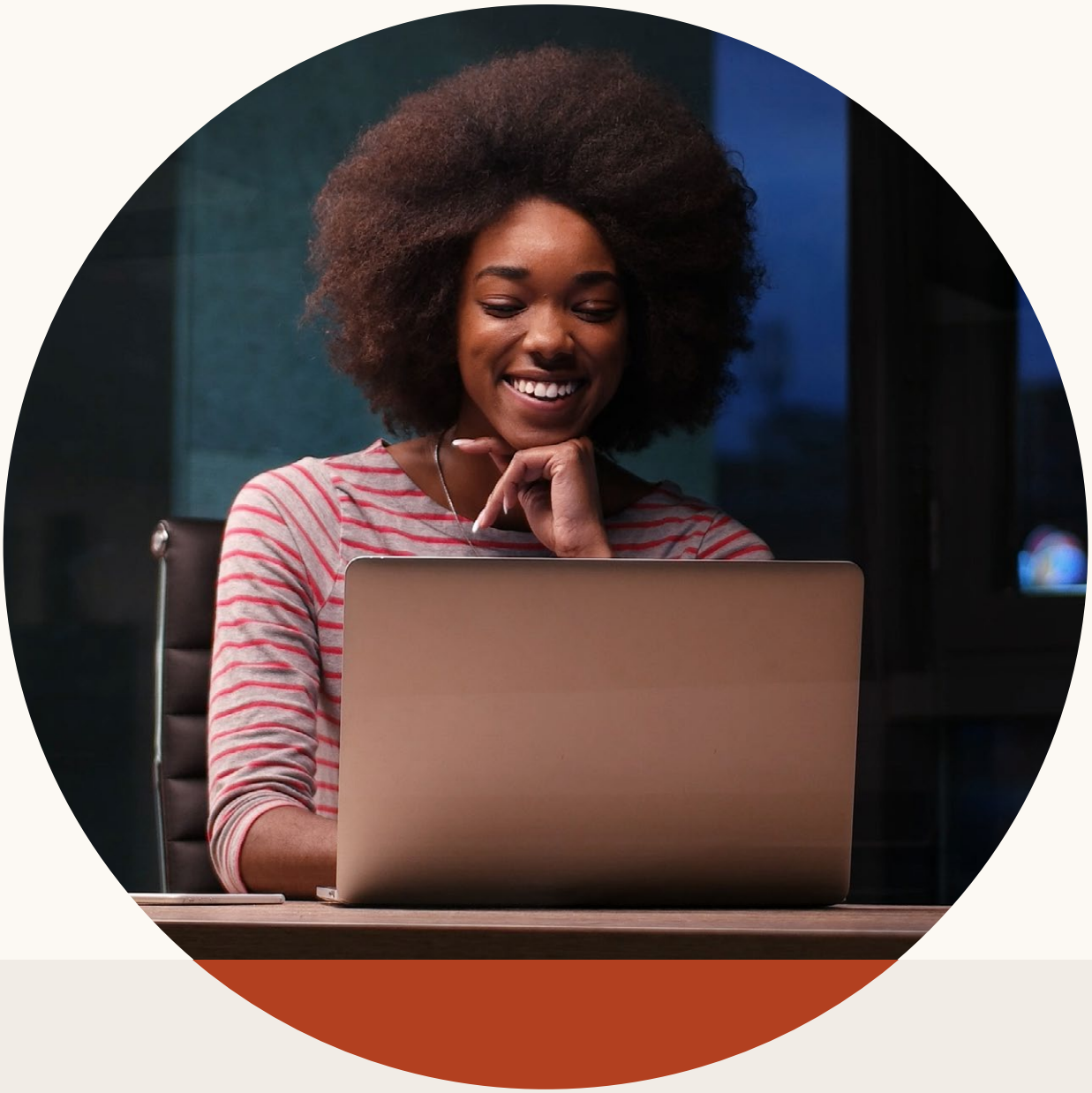
Part V

Conclusion

By utilizing LinkedIn's rich demographic data as well as your own data with Matched Audiences, you're better equipped to connect with those who matter most to your business.

Like all digital marketing, finding your sweet spot on LinkedIn takes experimentation. You'll need to test and optimize over time to find success.

Now that you've learned the fundamentals of targeting on LinkedIn, you're ready to start creating and optimizing your marketing campaigns. Go to the **LinkedIn Campaign Manager** to get started.



LinkedIn

For the first time in the history of media, you can reach the world's professionals all in one place. More than 610M 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**.