

Creating an effective LinkedIn account for business-to-business marketing for company X

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The goal of this thesis project was to create an effective LinkedIn account for a case company. The case company is a small entrepreneurial company designing and selling Nordic style interior décor items and jewellery. The case company wants to internationalize through a chain of international retailers and wanted to find an easier way to connect and network with prospects and leads than through event marketing. As LinkedIn offered the best platform for lead generating and finding future prospects, it was chosen as the channel of organic marketing, more precisely content marketing. In this thesis project, no paid advertising was used and the goal was to concentrate on the means and methods of business-to-business marketing. The goal of this thesis was not to generate leads but to create an effective LinkedIn account that could assist in lead generating in the future.

This thesis presents theory on business-to-business marketing in LinkedIn as well as methods of creating an effectively working LinkedIn Company page. The theory is a combination of literature written by social media marketing experts and an interview with a social media marketing professional. Other well-known Nordic style design brand company pages were also studied in LinkedIn, to gather information and get ideas for the implementation. These methods were then implemented by creating a company page in LinkedIn for the case company and producing relevant and interesting content on the company page in order to attract and engage followers. The content was altered during the implementation period to gather information on the means and methods that would work best for the case company. The implementation period was one month, during which results were gathered using the analytics and metrics of LinkedIn.

Based on the results of the implementation, it was clear that attracting followers requires existing brand recognition. A company with low brand recognition has to spend more time and effort to attract and engage followers. In the case of a small company with an unknown brand, the content has to be published at the right time on the right day and it has to be interesting to a wider public to assure as many views as possible. Engaging viewers to share and comment on the content increases the number of potential viewers and possible leads. Lead generating through social media marketing, using only owned media and organic marketing, is possible but requires a lot more time and possibly also financial input when the company has an unknown brand.

The results of this thesis project can be used to evaluate the benefit of creating an effective LinkedIn account for business-to-business marketing for small entrepreneurial companies with low brand recognition. However during the thesis implementation it was discovered that variation appears in the preferred methods of implementing for each individual company and therefore not all data is applicable to all companies.

Keywords

LinkedIn, business-to-business marketing, content marketing, social media marketing, owned media, organic marketing

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1 Introduction

This project based thesis consists of three main parts; theoretical, empirical and discussion. The theoretical part introduces the views of experts on LinkedIn as a social media platform and business-to-business marketing in LinkedIn through content marketing, using only owned media. The theoretical part also concentrates on the tools and methods of creating an effective LinkedIn account for business-to-business marketing purposes. The empirical part explains the phases of taking those tools and methods into use and analyses the results of the process as it goes along. The discussion part gathers together the knowledge of both the theoretical and the empirical phase and makes suggestions for the case company based on that knowledge.

1.1 The purpose of the thesis

The field of marketing has experienced many fast paced and crucial changes during the past 20 years, as digital marketing has been taking space from the traditional channels. Especially the rise of social media marketing has not only changed the methods of marketing, but also shaped the business culture. Today being on Facebook is as important to a company as having your own company web page was fifteen to twenty years ago.

Many Finnish companies concentrating in business-to-business (b2b) marketing have just recently founded LinkedIn accounts as it is “the place to be” in today’s business life. Yet most of them don’t know what to do there. Many people still see LinkedIn only as an extension to one’s CV, but it’s far more than that. No other channel offers what LinkedIn has, all the best and the brightest minds of business are active in LinkedIn, also searching for potential business partners. Because of its business – nature LinkedIn has managed to shield itself from poorly done advertising campaigns keeping the amount of content to tolerable, making it also easier for companies to stand out. At the same time it has also raised the bar and made it difficult for many companies to begin their marketing in LinkedIn.

The purpose of this project based thesis is to give an overview of the tools and methods recommended by experts, on how to use LinkedIn for business-to-business marketing purposes. As those tools and methods are then implemented during the project, actual results of the effect of those tools and methods can be measured. The goal of this project is to create an effective LinkedIn profile for the case company that can be used for business-to-business marketing purposes. In the long-term, having an effectively working LinkedIn profile can create leads of potential international business partners, while creating brand awareness and brand recognition. However due to the short implementation

period of this thesis project, these results cannot be measured. The purpose of this thesis is to offer knowledge and experience on using LinkedIn for business-to-business marketing purposes both for companies as well as individuals, working in the field of social media marketing.

1.2 Case company

The case company X is a small entrepreneurial company founded 10 years ago. It steadily employs only the CEO and founder of the company, who is responsible for the designs. The case company uses subcontractors for producing the products and packaging. Over the 10 years of its existence, the company has evolved from an artisanal production to subcontracting, while the main material of the products has changed from metal wire to wood. The main products of the company are interior design artefacts and jewellery made of birch plywood using a fine laser cutting technology. The products are mainly sold to consumers through small retailers around Finland and Etsy, the online sales community of small entrepreneurs (Etsy 2016). Before the company has gained new retailers taking part in national and international artisan fairs, but the CEO of the company is hoping to gain leads for potential international business partners through a quicker and easier channel. In the future the company aims to go international and expand its customer base to Scandinavia and Central Europe, while expanding its product line to e.g. linens and kitchen wares. The company is also planning on opening its own e-store as soon as it is financially possible.

1.3 Project objective and tasks

The objective of this thesis is to create an effectively working LinkedIn account for business-to-business marketing purposes by making an attractive profile with suitable content. The process of this project is divided into tasks presented below in figure 1. During this project necessary information is gathered based on literature, expert interview and exploring the LinkedIn profiles of other Nordic companies in similar industries. Once the knowledge base is gathered, it is implemented by creating a LinkedIn profile and producing there suitable content in order to attract possible leads of international business partners in the future. The results of this implementation are then analysed in order to make conclusions on the effects of each methods and tools. The analysis concentrates on the amount of followers on the company's page, as well as the effects of the content being published.

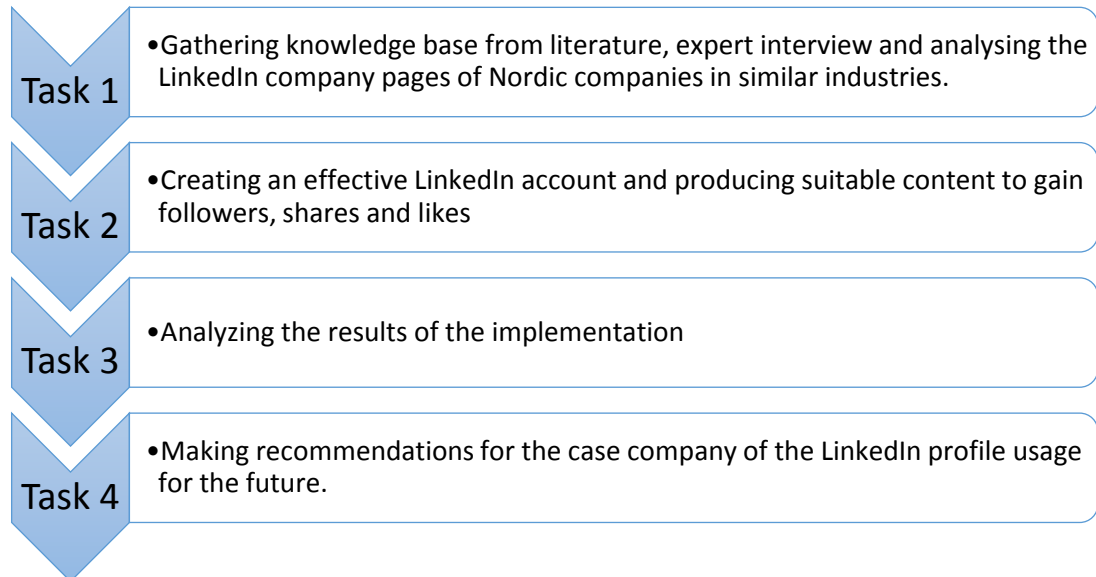


Figure 1. The project tasks of the project based thesis

1.4 Project scope

This project based thesis will concentrate on LinkedIn as a social media channel and the ways it can be used for business-to-business marketing purposes. This thesis concentrates on the methods of organic marketing such as content marketing and no paid advertising will be used. The strategy is to use solely owned media, while benefiting the shares and likes of other LinkedIn members. As LinkedIn is used as a channel of international marketing, all the content produced will be in English. However the marketing will not be targeted to any specific region, as the implementing phase of the project will be too short to gain measurable results for a small target region. The marketing will concentrate in business-to-business marketing in the knowledge base and exclude the business-to-customer marketing. In the knowledge base the main data sources used are literature, expert interview and analysing the existing LinkedIn profiles of companies with similar branding such as Marimekko, Kalevala koru and Snö of Sweden, who are all Nordic design brands producing clothing or jewellery. These companies are all active in LinkedIn with the reasonable amount of followers.

1.5 Key concepts

LinkedIn is a social media channel and world's largest professional network with over 433 million members in over 200 countries and territories (LinkedIn 2016a).

Business-to-business (b2b) marketing refers to the techniques and methods that a company selling products or services uses to reach another company (Brafton 2016).

Content marketing “Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.” (Content Marketing Institute 2016).

Owned media means any asset owned by the company itself, such as website, social network presence, a branded community etc. (Burcher 2012, 9).

Social media marketing is communication and engagement with one’s business audience in different social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter (von Rosen 2012, 2).

2 LinkedIn – the place to be

Over the past 10 years the world of marketing has changed dramatically, due to the adaptation of social media. Social media marketing has narrowed the gap between big multinational corporations (MNC's) and small or medium sized enterprises (SME's), offering everyone the similar possibilities to advertise and create brand recognition – with a reasonable price. Reaching a larger target audience or going global is no longer solely the question of financial resources. Instead social media channels such as Facebook or LinkedIn recommend focusing the campaigns on smaller and more focused target audiences, in order to save in marketing expenses. But “easy, quick or cheap” social media marketing is not (Evans 2010, 7).

Social media marketing is not only about understanding the target audience but also understanding the platform itself. Depending on the social media channel the code of conduct may vary. While Facebook or Twitter is seen as more relaxed and liberal, LinkedIn is strictly professional. That's why it is vital for any company to understand the type of the social media channel, the etiquette and the limitations.

2.1 LinkedIn as a social media channel

With over 433 million members in over 200 countries and territories, LinkedIn is the biggest professional network in the world (LinkedIn 2016a). Those members include executives from every Fortune 500 Companies (Schaffer 2011, 9). According to Schaffer (2011, 11) no other tool offers the same possibility to connect with such a huge number of decision makers. According to LinkedIn's own web page (2016a), LinkedIn started out in the in 2002, but it was officially launched on May 5, 2003. The CEO of the company Jeff Weiner gathered the company's management team of experienced executives from companies like Google, Microsoft, PayPal, and Electronic Arts. The revenues of the company consist of member subscriptions, advertisement sales and talent solutions. (LinkedIn 2016a.)

“LinkedIn is a social networking platform that allows you to connect, engage, and do business with other professional by making the relationships of your business network visible and by giving you the tools you need to connect with them” (von Rosen 2012, 4). In LinkedIn the company can take use of the free tools such as Slideshare or Groups to share their expertise and lure potential business partners, while creating brand recognition. Or sponsor their updates or benefit from the lead generator of the premium account in exchange for a relatively small payment.

2.1.1 The purpose of LinkedIn

As an extension to a CV, LinkedIn can be used for job hunting or displaying expertise for potential employers through a well-made profile. While LinkedIn is great for companies for recruitment purposes, it is even more important to be used for customer relationship management (CRM) and marketing. As the users of LinkedIn are professionals and business people, the platform offers a target audience of wealthy consumers for business-to-consumer (B2C) companies. (Schaffer 2011, 10). However LinkedIn is even more important for business-to-business (B2B) companies, since it is highly efficient tool for lead generating. According to Bodnar and Cohen (2012, 97) out of all social media sources, LinkedIn was able to create the largest percentage of customer acquisition.

LinkedIn offers various tools for both individuals and companies for networking and connecting with current and potential business partners. For companies LinkedIn can be used as “free yellow pages” (Schaffer 2011, 11). Whether the company is looking for potential employees or business partners, LinkedIn offers tools for both occasions. It makes networking easy using InMail or Groups, and for premium accounts Sales Navigator can assist a company in lead generating. It can also provide information relevant to business for free, as there are so many professionals sharing their knowledge. LinkedIn supports the company’s search engine optimization (SEO) and customer relationship management (CRM) and is just one tool to be added to the existing toolbox. (Schaffer 2011, 11.)

2.1.2 The etiquette of LinkedIn

Because LinkedIn is strictly professional, it is vital to understand the etiquette of LinkedIn. While Facebook is the platform to connect with friends, relatives and in some rare occasions, colleagues, LinkedIn is only meant for colleagues. It doesn’t mean that you cannot add your aunt or cousin as your connection, but it does limit what you should or shouldn’t post in LinkedIn. The profile page of each user should be professional all the way from the profile picture to the linguistics used in the descriptions. In LinkedIn the posting is limited strictly to business matters, but the information shouldn’t be too detailed as the competitors might be active in LinkedIn as well (Funk 2011, 67).

Unlike Twitter or Instagram, in LinkedIn the number of connections is more about quality than quantity. It is more important who you have as your connection rather than how many you have. LinkedIn discourages users to add connections they haven’t personally met for safety reasons. Even though LinkedIn is an ideal platform for cold-calling, adding unknown people as connections is considered rude and clueless. (Funk 2011, 67-68.) However it is socially acceptable to contact group members of LinkedIn Groups, especially as

a group leader. A group leader is allowed to even send email to group members, even if they do not know each other personally (Singletary 19 January 2016).

2.2 LinkedIn for marketing purposes

People don't like to be marketed to anymore and now they have a choice. Before TV ads were impossible to miss, until Netflix or TiVo came along. Now it is continuously harder to reach a person, which means that the marketing professionals need to find different methods of advertising. (Evans 2010, 261-262.) In many ways LinkedIn is better platform for marketing purposes than other social media channels like Facebook or Twitter. It offers more tools on showcasing expertise and sharing knowhow than the other channels, making content marketing easier. Those tools can also help engaging people, which is a crucial method of marketing in social media platforms. LinkedIn also offers good tools for follow-ups and calculating click-through-rates (CTR) and conversions (Schaffer 2011, 160).

LinkedIn offers a variety of tools through which the proper audiences can be reached such as Groups, Answers and Events. By joining in different groups in LinkedIn and sharing valuable information to other members while networking with them, gives a good impression of the person as well as the company he or she represents. It can also help contacting potential business partners and finding leads. In the Answers section information can be shared and gathered, which might assist in finding future prospects as well as bring much needed knowledge from experts. The Events application is particularly useful tool for networking with others working the same business field. The application gives information of upcoming and past events and shows the participants of those professional events, helping to find valuable connections of future business partners. (Schaffer 2011, 106-123.)

In LinkedIn paid advertising is also an option, although rarely necessary. Because LinkedIn makes it easy to reach people only through owned and earned media, using paid media is not mandatory. There are two options for paid media in LinkedIn: Ads and Sponsored updates (LinkedIn 2016b). LinkedIn Ads makes it possible to contact all users, even those who are not part of Groups or have tight networks. Using a very well-targeted advertising based on job title, gender, age or LinkedIn Group guarantees the highest return on investment (ROI). Since the cost of the ad is paid like in other social media platforms, pay-per-click (PPC), creating detailed target groups is economically reasonable. (Schaffer 2011, 160-67.) Sponsoring company updates guarantees that more people will be able to see them, giving a better chance to gain new followers (LinkedIn 2016b).

2.2.1 LinkedIn for business-to-business marketing

For business-to-business companies the marketing in LinkedIn is not only about showcasing products or services, but about creating connections and leads. Finding new prospects is a lot easier in LinkedIn than in any of the other social media platforms, since most of the professionals are active in LinkedIn and looking for the same thing – potential business partners. As shown in figure 2. LinkedIn was the most effective channel for business-to-business marketing purposes when acquiring new customers (Knyszewski 31 January 2015). There are three most important steps for a company to take in order to succeed in lead generating in LinkedIn (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 108).

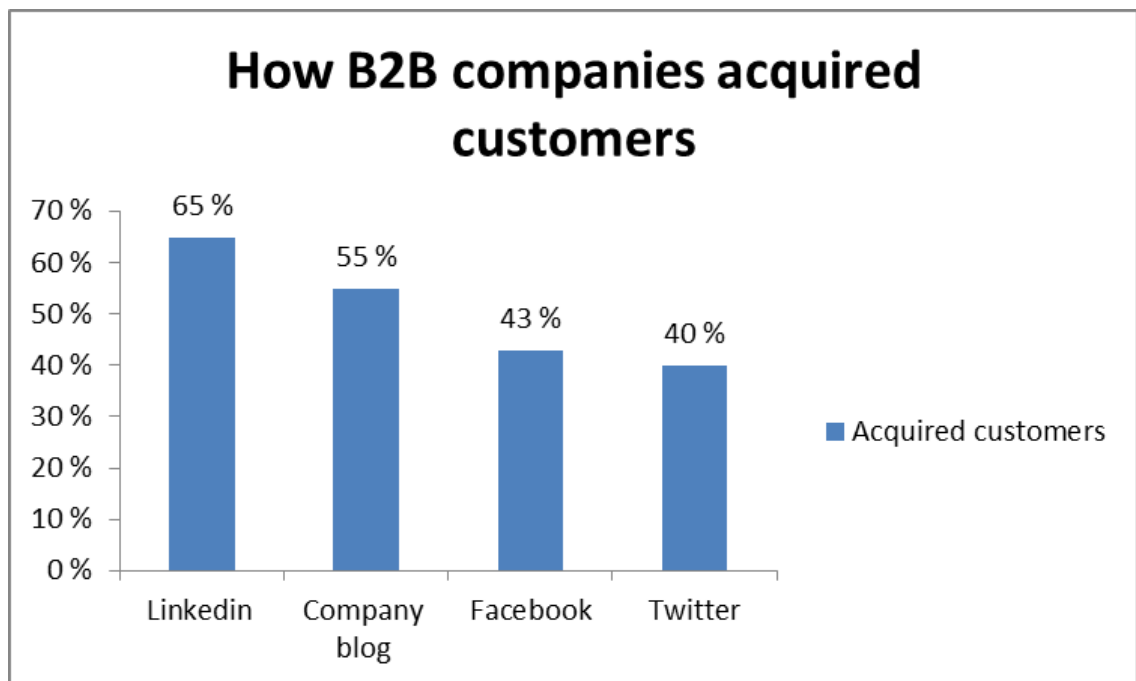


Figure 2. How B2B companies have acquired their customers (Knyszewski 31 January 2015).

In LinkedIn the company profile called Company Page is created using the personal profile of the key persona of the company (LinkedIn Help 2016a). In small companies that is often the CEO; in larger corporations it can be the marketing manager of one of the employees. Because the company page is so closely linked it is important that both the personal profile as well as the Company Page is professionally made. Completing the company profile is the key step on creating leads in LinkedIn (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 108). Another important step is joining groups in LinkedIn Groups that are relevant to your field of business and where the target prospects are active. The third step is to share important content in LinkedIn based on a set frequency. (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 108.)

LinkedIn also offers a paid premium service called Sales Navigator, which offers features assisting lead generating (LinkedIn 2016c). The premium service is only possible for a private account and not for Company Page. It is recommendable for the key persona responsible for company's LinkedIn activities to adapt it. Using its features it is possible to define what kind of leads the company is looking for based on e.g. industry or company size. The premium service even recommends preferable leads for the user and shows possible connections within the company to contact the prospects. Using the Sales Navigator the user gets access to unlimited searches in the extended network. (LinkedIn 2016c.) Adapting the Sales Navigator the user gets two separate LinkedIn pages, the personal profile, as well as the Sales Navigator page, both of which have their own inbox for private messaging. Compared to other social media platforms commonly used for lead generating, LinkedIn was the best way to create leads as can be seen in figure 3. (Knyszewski 31 January 2015).

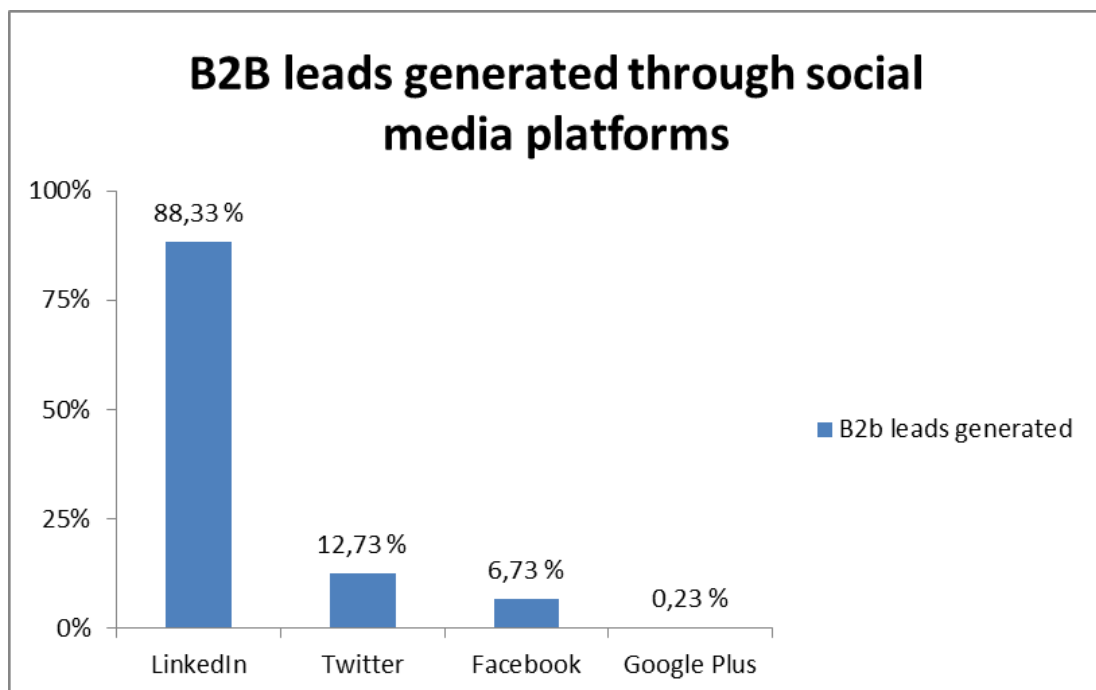


Figure 3. Where companies generated the most B2B leads (Knyszewski 31 January 2015).

2.2.2 Importance of content marketing in LinkedIn

Reaching people with traditional advertising, even in social media channels has become more difficult. Browsing through the news feed, ignoring ads is easy. Since paid advertising requires both time and money, content marketing has taken its place as the number one method of marketing in all social media platforms. All the experts highlight the importance of showing expertise and sharing knowledge with the potential prospects to create leads and brand awareness. This is exactly what content marketing does. Content marketing is defined as indirect form of marketing and the key message is not to sell but

to lure the clients to get familiar with the company, before making the decision themselves (Kortesuo 2014, 94). As a social media marketing platform LinkedIn was the most preferred channel for distributing content among business-to-business marketers as can be seen in figure 4 (Sobal 21 December 2015).

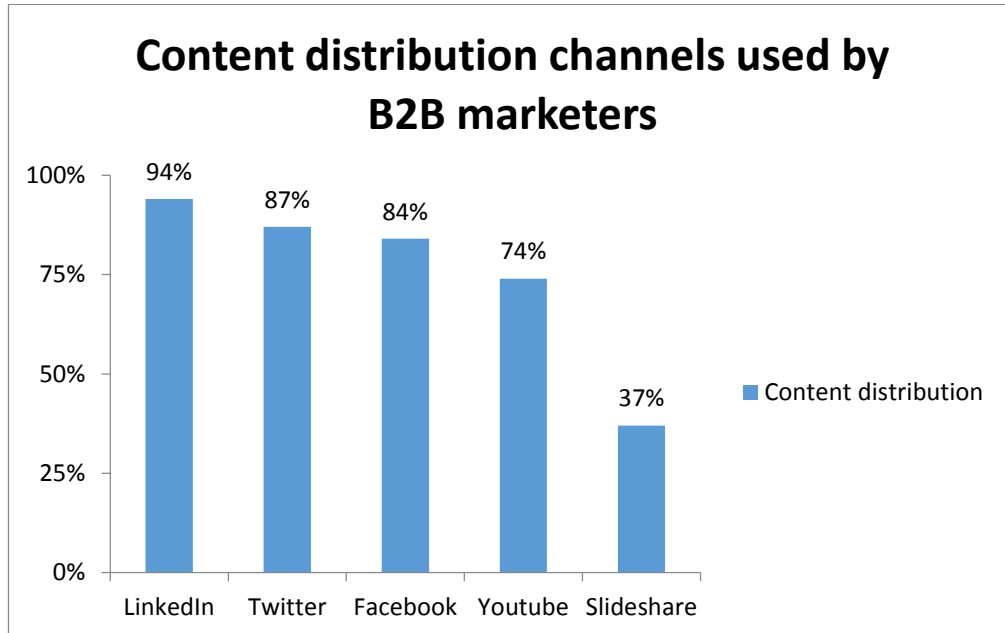


Figure 4. Channels used for content distribution by B2B marketers (Sobal 21 December 2015).

Traditional form of content marketing is blogging, most commonly using the company web page. However lack of sustainability of the audience has led to the rise of other types of content media such as videos, photographs and infographics. LinkedIn offers a tool called Slideshare which helps to share professional looking content such as presentations and documents, which can help to create leads and built the company image (LinkedIn Help 2016b). It even has its own lead generation tools to assist in finding and connecting with new prospects (LinkedIn Help 2016c). Since the Company Page in LinkedIn doesn't allow publishing posts, all longer blog type posts are done through the key personas private page or by sharing the blog post in the company's own website. The Company Page can only share long-form posts or publish status updates. (LinkedIn Help 2016d.) Status updates also work as a method of sharing articles and videos and the target audience can be limited either to connections or public. As LinkedIn is professional social media platform, it is important to take notice what type of status updates are and are not suitable. (Pirouz 20 July 2015.).

The most important thing in content marketing is the quality of the content. According to Lasse Rouhiainen (21 April 2016), an expert in social media marketing, it is more im-

portant to post content that is valuable once a week, than post something that is useless for the receiver every day. The content must create value to the reader in able to give a positive impression of the company (Evans 2010, 225-226). By listening to the target audience, it is possible to comprehend what is valuable content for the key audience and what is not, since it doesn't always mean the same thing for both parties (Evans 2010, 226-229). Even though the purpose of content marketing is to indirectly market products and services, it also assists in search engine optimization (SEO), which is highly important for a company. Appearing high in search engine results helps the company to find customers and prospects, as well as make the produced content more visible for them. (Evans 2010, 273-276.) For the content to be search engine optimized it is important to use industry related key words in all long-form posts and to tag the company website into the content. Having industry related key words linked to the company helps the prospects to find the company through search engines and tagging the website increases the rank in search engine results. (Kabani 2010, 25-31.) The search engine optimization should never affect the quality of the content, as Kabani (2010, 28) says: "Content is the king".

2.3 Measuring the success of using LinkedIn

With paid marketing, estimating the success of using LinkedIn is easy. Calculating the return on investment (ROI) based on the pay-per-click advertisement is easy with LinkedIn's campaign management and analytics tools (Shaffer 2011, 165-167). However if the marketing in LinkedIn is only based on organic marketing, using owned media, the measurement is far more difficult, yet necessary. Similar to all marketing campaigns, LinkedIn marketing needs to be measured in order to understand which actions were successful and which were not, in able to improve the return on investment (ROI) in further marketing actions. Measuring success of using LinkedIn for marketing purposes is more about quality than it is about quantity.

Measuring the success of LinkedIn marketing is to be done using a variety of key performance indicators (KPI's). Those KPI's can be divided to two main categories: lagging and leading metrics. Lagging metrics can be directly related to productivity, such as leads per marketing campaign or number of prospecting sales. Leading metrics on the other hand are the actual activities performed that eventually lead to results such as leads or sales. These kinds of leading metrics can be for example the number of new connection per week or number of researches made on new prospects per week. (Seiden 24 July 2013.) The key to a successful performance in LinkedIn is to have a clear objective and a daily or weekly routine to LinkedIn. It is also important to have measurable metrics than can be analysed on a daily, weekly or quarterly period. Calculating the actual return on investment (ROI) might be difficult, since organic marketing in LinkedIn is free; therefore it is

hard to put a number on the efforts made. To have an estimate of the ROI can be calculated by measuring the time spent on LinkedIn marketing efforts and compare it to the results gained. (Schaffer 2011, 180-181.)

When it comes to social media marketing, regardless of the platform, it is important to realise, that there are many intangible benefits related to it that cannot be measured. Reaching mindshare with potential leads and prospects or gaining offline word of mouth is important for marketing as well. If the objectives set for LinkedIn marketing are not met, changes to the efforts should be done gradually to notice, which methods work and which doesn't. (Schaffer 2011, 181.) Even though there are many ways to enhance the success of LinkedIn marketing, nothing guarantees success. A successful strategy is often built gradually over time by experimenting and analysing the gained results.

2.3.1 Role of followers and group engagement

As in any platform, in LinkedIn reaching the target audience is really important. With organic marketing it is impossible to reach only a certain type of demographic in the most efficient way. That's why it is important to gain as much visibility as possible. Even with a public profile and public posts, the content is often limited to the followers of the company and/or the 1st connections of the key persona publishing the content. Similar to Facebook, LinkedIn has made sharing, liking and commenting in LinkedIn very easy. It is also recommendable to do so. Once a post is being shared by a user, it becomes visible to that person's connections. In LinkedIn, newsfeed also shows likes and comments of the user making the posts visible to that person's network. (LinkedIn Help 2016e.) Having the content shared, liked and commented by other users of LinkedIn ensures that the post becomes visible to more and more people. That's why it is recommendable to use a call-to-action at the end of the post such as "share the content" or "leave your comment below".

According to social media marketing expert Lasse Rouhiainen (21 April 2016) followers are really important in LinkedIn. Followers are there to share content and comment making the content visible to their own network. Attracting followers is not easy, especially for a small company. With a larger corporation, engaging employees and business partners brings more followers. But for a smaller company employing only one or two persons being active is more important. Adding a "follow-button" to the company web page or announcing an email newsletter of the recently opened LinkedIn Company Page can assist with finding new followers. But more often it requires activity from the key persona in LinkedIn Groups and sharing content valuable enough to be shared. (LinkedIn Help Companies 2016.) However attracting followers is not enough. It is also important to engage

the followers in order to maximize the visibility. Having tailored informative content that is valuable to the reader, ensures that more people are likely to comment and share the posts. Another important aspect is the sufficiency of the content. Shorter posts are more likely to gain and keep up the interest of the reader than long ones. With LinkedIn organic marketing, it is important to keep the content publishing consistent and concentrate the publishing either in the morning or after business hours – depending on the company and its target audience. (LinkedIn Help Companies 2016.)

Getting content shared by followers is also important from the perspective of recommendation. Having original content posted by the company shared by followers and even connections of followers is a stamp of quality for the company. “Amplification” can endorse the company brand and it is very important in engaging followers. LinkedIn’s own studies suggest that people were more likely to engage to a status update as non-followers than followers. Most likely as the both the company and the content were unfamiliar to the non-follower. (LinkedIn Help Companies 2016.) Creating valuable content leads to endorsement, which leads to engagement which leads to more visibility, new followers and new connections that might become new leads.

2.3.2 Importance of brand awareness

While LinkedIn is good for gaining visibility, showing of expertise and therefore gaining brand awareness, the lack of existing brand awareness affects the amount of followers a company can get. Followers then again are very important for the sake of networking and sharing content in order to gain more visibility. So in order to get brand awareness, the company needs followers, but doesn’t get followers without brand awareness. For example Marimekko, a traditional and well-known Finnish textile company has over 8000 followers in LinkedIn, despite their lack of marketing efforts. Marimekko has an optimized profile and they use LinkedIn for recruitment purposes, but no content is being published. Only a few articles relating to Marimekko are being shared by the company profile. They are present but not active. (Marimekko 2016a.) This is proof that a company with an existing strong brand like Marimekko, can gain visibility without trying. But a company with low brand awareness needs to be more active in order to gain visibility and attract both followers and potential leads. Brand awareness is one of the main goals of marketing and just as important in social media platforms such as LinkedIn.

Marimekko is however advertising their LinkedIn page in their company webpage and encouraging people to follow them on LinkedIn (Marimekko 2016b). Companies like Snö of Sweden and Kalevala koru have no mentioning in their web page that they are present in LinkedIn (Kalevala koru 2016a; Snö of Sweden 2016a). Kalevala koru has not opti-

mized the LinkedIn profile to the detail e.g. there is no banner and the number of employees active in LinkedIn is small compared to the size of the company. An almost a year-old recruitment ad shows lack of activity in LinkedIn. The number of followers on their page is only 276. (Kalevala Koru 2016b.) Snö of Sweden's LinkedIn profile has a banner to give some visual aspect but the lack of customized LinkedIn URL and the small amount of active LinkedIn members as employees affect the amount of followers the company has. Snö of Sweden has only 164 LinkedIn followers, when in Facebook they have over 16 000 likers. (Snö of Sweden 2016b; Snö of Sweden 2016c.) Being active in LinkedIn by producing content and having a visually attractive profile that is detailed all the way to the customized URL, and by advertising the presence in LinkedIn at other platforms such as the company's web page, has a huge effect on the amount of followers in LinkedIn. Existing brand awareness can assist in gaining followers in LinkedIn, but just as much can be gained through hard work and strategic marketing decisions.

2.4 Tools for effective account building

The role of the valuable content is all part of having an effective account, but not the only thing that matters. Being active in LinkedIn by sharing and posting content is important, but it all begins from having a LinkedIn account that attracts followers and viewers. It is just as important as having a well-planned web page, or even more important, as it is the first thing the future prospect might see. Even though LinkedIn doesn't offer similar tools to marketing as other social media platforms, it offers many tools for effective account building, which will lead to networking, brand awareness and reaching new prospects. Applications such as Slideshare and Showcase page assist in effective profile building by giving tools on showing of expertise and sharing valuable information. It is not only about the profile, even though both the personal profile of the key persona as well as the Company Page is important. But it is also about keywords usage, which can help to rank the company high on search engine results, making the profile also a valuable search engine optimizing (SEO) tool. (Schaffer 2011, 40.)

Slidehare can be used to share information and show of expertise by creating infographs, videos or presentations (LinkedIn Help 2016b). It is an assisting tool for creating and sharing content in LinkedIn, and the presentations can be shared in LinkedIn, as well as other channels such as email, Facebook or Twitter. The more shares the content gets on different platforms, the better ratings it gets in search engine rankings. LinkedIn Slideshare offers analytics to measure the amount of viewers, where the viewers are coming from and how well a particular content is succeeding. (LinkedIn Help 2016f.) Slideshare's purpose is to present more the knowledge and expertise of the company, whereas LinkedIn Showcase pages purpose is to present the company itself. It is an addition to the actual

Company Page and it is possible to have many at the same time, each for a particular product or market (Laferte 17 March 2014). Showcase pages are meant for long-term marketing campaigns and should be directed to particular audiences and target groups (LinkedIn Help 2016g). Having a Showcase page can help to concentrate producing targeted content to particular customers, which is important especially at bigger companies with versatile production lines. The Showcase page is visually more alluring with bigger images and less company related data such as available jobs or service tabs, which makes it easier for the viewer to concentrate on the content. (Laferte 17 March 2016.)

Like in any other social media platform, in LinkedIn also, the keywords are highly important. Using industry related, carefully but consistently placed keywords, assist the target audience in finding the company. Persistent keyword usage also assists in search engine optimization (SEO) both in LinkedIn and in search engines such as Google. Suitable keywords can be found e.g. using Google AdWords Keyword Tool or scanning through the profiles of industry influencers. (von Rosen 2012, 68-72.) The proper keyword usage is just as important in the Company Page, as well as the profiles of employees of the company, especially in the profile of the key persona. Optimizing keywords is highly important for strategic inbound marketing, and should be noted in every employees profile building. Keywords should be used in headlines, summary and specialities sections, and descriptions of companies currently and formerly as business partners and most importantly in the content produced. (Schaffer 2012, 40-41.) However with content creation the actual value and readability of the content is more important than having the optimum number of keywords included.

2.4.1 Profile page

In LinkedIn the Company Page is managed through a personal profile of a member of the company such as the CEO or another key persona (LinkedIn Help 2016a). Therefore optimizing also the personal profile of the key persona is just as important, as optimizing the company profile. Through visual effects such as having a professional picture in the personal profile or a company logo and a banner in LinkedIn Company Page are the first steps towards an optimized and effective LinkedIn account for lead creation purposes. According to a study 20% of the time spent on looking at a profile was spent on looking at the picture. (Singletary 19 January 2016.) Keeping in mind that LinkedIn is highly professional both the images posted, as well as the text should be appropriate and business-like. "Your profile is, in essence, a snapshot of the brand you are sharing with the entire world" (Schaffer 2011, 23). After all in LinkedIn it is mainly people connecting to people, rather than companies contacting companies.

For the personal profile the picture should be professional and clear but showing a little personality. Having a picture is highly important as people tend to prefer connecting with a person with a face rather than just a name. (Schaffer 2011, 25-27.) The name in the profile should be a real name excluding nicknames, and there should be at least email and preferably phone number so that potential leads and prospects are able to take contact. Having a Zip code is also highly recommended as searches related to specific locations can leave the profile out. Many business people prefer to limit the searches to the market they operate on. (Schaffer 2011, 24-26.) Along with the name and the picture on of the most important things in the LinkedIn profile is headline, which sums up the current status of the profile owner, both the professional status as well as the company (Schaffer 2011, 28). Using industry related terms in the headline and summary gives a good impression and shows of expertise, as well as enhances the search engine optimization (SEO) by adding keywords to the profile (Singletary 19 January 2016). The summary can be a longer version of the headline and explain in detail of the interests and experience as well as the personality of the profile owner (Schaffer 2011, 28-31).

The work experience as well as education should be filled in detail to explain both the knowledge base as well as the experience of the profile owner. It also stands as proof to prospects or potential leads that the profile is not fake (Schaffer 2011, 31-33). Personalizing the LinkedIn URL to one's own might seem like a small thing, but gives a more professional outlook. That and having a company web page in the contact details, assure that the possible leads will find the company after first finding the key persona through interesting content or commenting in Groups. (Schaffer 2011, 33.) There are many other ways to personalize the profile in order to stand out from the crowd such as adding Awards, Volunteer work or Publications to the profile. (von Rosen 2012, 89-92.) The final touch to a well-made profile that gives a good impression of the profile owner as well as the company he or she represents is getting recommendations from former colleagues, managers or even business partners. A good word from someone else definitely will make the profile stand from the crowd. (Schaffer 2011, 39.)

2.4.2 Company Page

The LinkedIn Company Page is the first thing a potential lead or prospect sees after searching for future business partners, so putting effort on the Company Page is just as important as in the personal profile, or even more so. Just like in the personal profile page, the image and keywords play an important role in the Company Page design. Entering contact information and especially the ZIP code is even more important in the Company Page than in the personal profile. Once the Company Page is set in the most preferable

method, producing valuable content to it increases visibility and attracts followers. Using the Showcase page as an extension of the Company Page ensures more possible leads. Just having the account is not enough, but the Company Page requires activity in order to reach more prospects. With a well-prepared and active LinkedIn Company Page, it is possible to create a huge number of new leads that overtime can turn into potential business partners (Singletary 19 January 2016).

In the Company Page it is possible to create two images for the company: one for the company logo that appears in all the posts and updates similar to the profile picture of a personal profile, and another bigger image for the Company Page that attracts page visitors. The smaller company logo should be the official logo of the company, a very recognisable item, as it is the first thing that a viewer sees next to a post or an update. (Schaffer 2011, 66.) The bigger image can be more visibly alluring and telling more about the company's backstory. Similar to the personal profile adding keywords to the Company Page, ensures better search results in search engines, making it easier for the potential leads and prospects to find the company. In the Company Page the company description is a good place to add important industry related keywords in. The company description is a short presentation of what the company does and what its values are. The text should be according to the company's brand image, but still filled with keywords in order for the company to rank high also in the LinkedIn Companies search The specialties section can include maximum of 20 specialties, which is plenty for a smaller company but limited for a bigger one with versatile operations. Choosing the right keywords that potential leads and prospects might use in order to search for companies in the industry is crucial, also in the specialties section. (Schaffer 2011, 66.) Specialties section is also important because it is the short description of the company's operations and explains only with few words, what the description is telling about the company. Adding the ZIP code for the company is vital in the Company Page as many of the searches made by potential leads are made using the ZIP code. It is possible to add five locations for the company, which is feasible especially for big companies operating in many markets. (Schaffer 2011 67.)

To present specific services or products in LinkedIn, the company can establish as an extension to the Company Page a more visual Showcase page. Through the Showcase page products and services can be presented one by one and each product can have its own audience with its own analytics to follow the metrics. The Showcase page can be an important addition to the Company Page in order to gain more visibility, more followers and to attract more leads. Having separate platforms for different products and services is especially useful in a big company. (Cooper 28 March 2014.) Similar to the personal profile account the Company Page is only partially full without suitable content being pub-

lished either through updates or blog posts. As it is not possible to publish long-form posts through LinkedIn Company Page, it is recommendable to include the companies RSS blog feed to the Company Page in order to ensure that the posts reach the audience also in LinkedIn. (LinkedIn Help 2016d; Schaffer 2011, 74-75.) Another option is that one of the company employees that manage the Company Page publishes the content on their own profile and the company merely shares the link to the blog post as an update. However at bigger companies with multiple Company Page admins, it can get confusing if the blog posts are published from several separate personal accounts. In those cases using the RSS blog feed is better. The Company Page can have as many admins as necessary but for safety reasons the number should be limited. In bigger companies the admins are most commonly the marketing department employees and at small entrepreneurial companies the admin is most often the CEO. (Schaffer 2011, 65-66.)

2.4.3 The role of key persona

Even if the purpose of LinkedIn marketing is business-to-business marketing, it is the people who connect to people. That is why it is important that the company has a key persona, someone who embodies the company and gives it a face. In bigger corporations that can mean multiple people. A marketing department or HR department, depending on whether LinkedIn is used for marketing or recruitment purposes – or both. In smaller entrepreneurial companies it is in most cases the CEO. The role of the key persona is highly important as there are number of tasks included. Whether it is a big corporation or a small entrepreneurial company, the key personas have to keep in mind, that in the social media and particularly in LinkedIn, they represent the company, the brand and not themselves. Therefore it is crucial to think twice what to post or update in LinkedIn or any other channel, as the public posts are visible to all. (Schaffer 2011, 3-5.) And in order to reach potential leads and prospects the profile has to be public.

One of the most important tasks of the key persona in LinkedIn is to manage the Company Page. The Company Page in LinkedIn is built around a personal profile and managed through the profile of an admin. (LinkedIn Help 2016a.) The key personas main task is to keep the information on the Company Page up to date and optimized for lead generating. All the posts and updates done through the Company Page are made by the admin of the page, the key persona, who also has the duty of answering to questions and comments that the posts get. Especially when posting anything through the Company Page, it is crucial to keep in mind that the company has a certain type of brand image. All posts and updates and even shares of others posts should be supporting that image. (Schaffer 2011, 3-5.) The key persona is not only responsible of the content producing and social

activity through posting and sharing but also by being active in Groups. The Groups are important for lead generating and networking and it is the key persona who joins various industry related groups, as the company cannot do it. (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 103-105.)

In business-to-business marketing perspective the most important task of the key persona is networking and contacting potential leads. After the connection has been made e.g. in LinkedIn Groups, it is the key personas duty to contact the potential leads by messaging through LinkedIn or sending email. The key persona can also enhance the lead generating by using a paid LinkedIn Premium service called the Lead generator. The Lead generator offers advantages such as Advanced Search that can assist in finding the right contact persons. (LinkedIn 2016c.) Having a Premium account also opens the possibility for Inmail, a more professional way to contact potential leads in LinkedIn and offers a possibility to message to people in LinkedIn that are not yet contacts (LinkedIn Help 2016h). The key persona is also the first connection to the potential lead or prospect when contacting the company. That is why it is important for the key persona to have all the personal profile professional and accessible. The key persona or in some cases the key personas are “the sales representatives” of the company in LinkedIn and play an important role in lead generating and networking. The key persona is the face of the company and representative of the brand image the company has.

2.4.4 The style and frequency of content marketing

Having a luring title with numbers and “how to”- beginning phrases, helps to reach more people (Rouhiainen 21 April 2016). Quality content is not only interesting to the audience but also makes them act. That’s why it is important to add a call-to-action (CTA) at the end of the post, such as “share this” or “click the link to learn more”, driving the prospect to the company web page. (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 84-85.) As the purpose of the content is also to inform and share knowledge, thus showing of expertise of the company, there are many forms of content marketing as shown in figure 5.

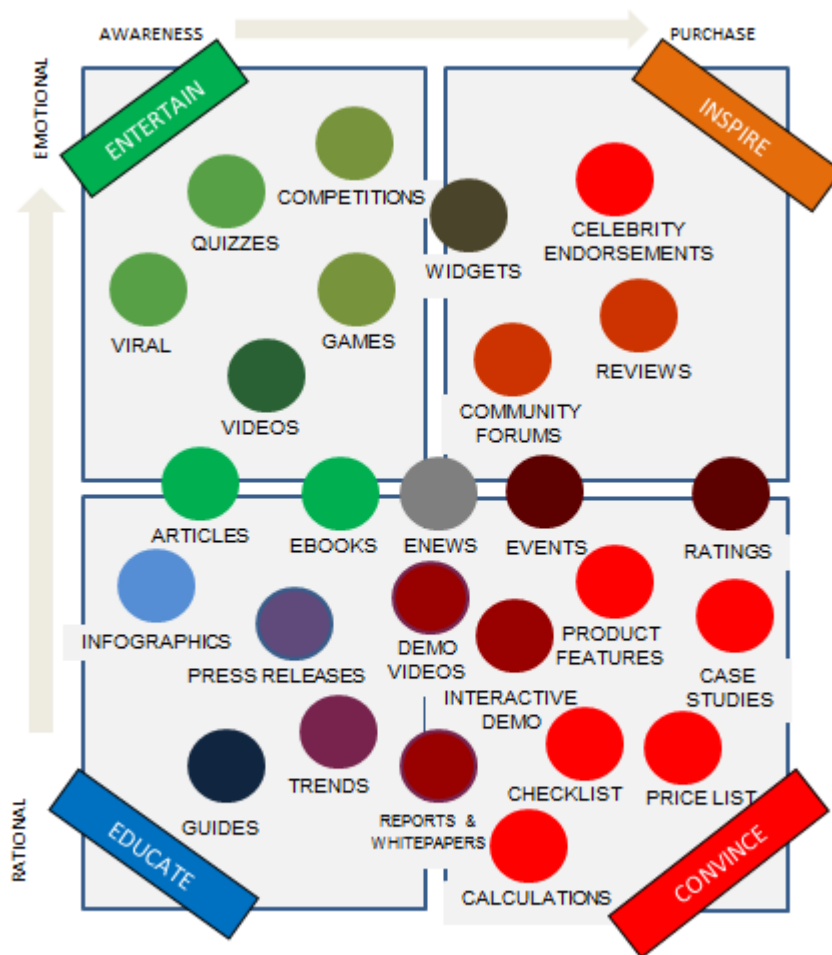


Figure 5. Content Marketing Planning Template (Chaffey 2015)

The purpose of the figure 5. template is to suggest different types of content options for different purposes. If the company's goal is to educate people they can produce infographics or guides to be shared in their social media platforms, but if the purpose is to inspire the customer to get familiar with the brand or even purchase something the company can publish reviews or use celebrity endorsements. The different types of content are also suitable at different phases of the purchasing process. For example the reviews are good at the very end of the purchasing process, when the potential buyer has already made the decision of buying but still needs some convincing. Reviews should therefore never be posted as general information in order to lure customers into company's web page. It is also important to realize that at different phases of the purchasing process the content is meant to appeal to either the rational side or the emotional side of the customer. When using the template for content marketing planning, it is important to also remember that not all methods of content suit for all companies. The target audience as well as the platform dictate also whether some forms of content are suitable at all. The content marketing template can offer a valuable tool when designing the type of content that is produced. But

the most important is the quality and frequency of the content, as was stated by Lasse Rouhiainen (21 April 2016) in his interview.

In LinkedIn the most powerful ways of content marketing are articles and videos (Lasse Rouhiainen 21 April 2016). But also infographs, presentations and other type of content marketing are valuable. However the timing is also important. According to studies made by social media marketing experts, in LinkedIn the best time to post is during business hours, no matter what the content is. As LinkedIn is very business-like in its nature, people tend to use it more at work than outside work. According to studies the best times to post content in LinkedIn to gain most visibility is Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, during business hours. During those weekdays people are most active in LinkedIn in the morning between 7.30am and 8.30 am, again at lunch time at noon and just after work at 5pm to 6pm. The most effective time for publishing is Tuesdays between 10am and 11am. (Kolowich 6 January 2016.) In the target audience is global it is impossible to post content into LinkedIn so that it reaches everyone at the most preferable hour. That's why it is profitable to concentrate the publishing based on the main markets time zone. According to Lasse Rouhiainen (21 April 2016), the quality of the content is still more important than the frequency of it. Even though activity is important as well, it is more important to publish good quality once a week than publish poor quality every day. (Rouhiainen 21 April 2016.)

3 The process of creating an effective LinkedIn account

The goal of this implementation process was to create an effectively working LinkedIn account for a case company. To create brand awareness among B2B and B2C customers and establish presence in LinkedIn as a social media channel, by producing valuable and interesting content. The initial goal of having an effective LinkedIn account was to generate leads and prospects of retailers of various countries for international expansion. However such results were not promised, as the implementation period of one month was too short to create networks and build relationships with potential business partners. The project was based on organic marketing and no or little financial input was to be put in the business-to-business marketing. Paid advertising was not to be included in the implementation process of this thesis. During the implementation process different types of content marketing was tried out, as well as different frequency of publishing. The content was published at different times of the day at different times of the week, in order to get insight on the engagement level of each date and time to find the best one. The content was created based on the wants of the case company as well as the recommendations of the experts, which resulted also in different engagement levels of followers. All measurements of engagements are based on the analytics of LinkedIn. In this chapter the implementation process is explained through the different processes of the effective account building from profile creation to content marketing. At the end of chapter 3 results of the implementation are gathered and the whole process of implementation is summarized.

3.1 Current situation of the case company

The case company X is a small entrepreneurial company producing Nordic style interior décor and jewellery made of laser cut birch plywood. The company was founded in 2006 and it started out as a one-woman company; an artisan working for herself. During the past decade the company has grown and today even though the entrepreneurial company still only employs one regular employee, the CEO, there are subcontractors doing most of the production. The sales are done through retailers and online shop community Etsy, but the company is going to open its own e-shop in the future. The company is only gradually started to internationalize and at the moment it has an agent in Japan responsible for sales, marketing and distribution in the Japanese market. However the sales are still quite small. The company is willing to expand especially in the European market as well as gain more brand recognition and bigger sales opportunities in Finland. The CEO is more interested in expanding internationally through retailers, as it is financially safer and more economical. The company has low brand recognition at the moment but has potential of growing both locally and internationally.

The product line and the design of the products are unique and there are no other similar products available, that uses the same laser cut technology. The products are packed so that they are easily shipped through regular mail and having a compact packaging means smaller logistical expenses. As the products are entirely made of wood, they are ecological and sustainable, which are both values that consumers today appreciate. If necessary they are even recyclable. The minimalistic Nordic design is timeless and makes it easy to fit in all types of interior decorations. The obstacles of internationalisation are low brand recognition, lack of international network of retailers and scarcity of economic resources. The company is operating well financially, but there are no resources for huge financial outputs to marketing or sales. As the company only regularly employs the CEO, most of the work is concentrated on one person, who is responsible for design, marketing and sales.

3.1.1 Social media marketing

At the moment the case company X is concentrating the social media marketing in platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Facebook is good for reaching consumers as it is the most popular social media platform (Funk 2011, 54). It also offers better opportunities for marketing and especially paid advertising than LinkedIn (Rouhiainen 21 April 2016). According to the CEO of the case company X, Instagram has still been by far the best social media platform for the company to reach consumers and gain brand recognition. As the products are visually very alluring, Instagram offers the best platform to highlight the qualities of the products. The case company X's main social media marketing channel is Instagram and it is used almost daily. Both Facebook and Instagram have been used for establishing competitions and sharing updates with the likers and followers of the company. In Instagram the company has over 1 260 followers and in Facebook over 1000 likers at the company page. The company also has its own Youtube channel, but it isn't in active use. Youtube is not used as a marketing channel but merely to support the other channels. Other existing form of social media marketing is the company blog in the case company's web site that publishes content infrequently. It is also possible to order the company newsletter as email from the company's web page.

According to the company CEO, especially at the company blog but also as hashtags in Instagram, the company uses keywords to emphasize the search engine optimisation (SEO). However the company does not have a clear strategy for social media or digital marketing, nor does it have a publishing schedule according to which content is being published through different platforms. The case company doesn't have a Company Page in LinkedIn and the personal profile of the CEO is not being used actively for networking or sharing updates and content. The company's social media marketing actions are main-

ly concentrated for business-to-consumer (B2C) purposes and there is no business-to-business (B2B) marketing done. At the moment the various channels work well on their own, but they don't really support each other in a very clear manner. As the CEO is among everything else, also responsible for the social media marketing, the lack of time is the main issue, when it comes to activity in various social media platforms.

3.1.2 Business-to-business marketing

The case company X's business-to-business marketing has mainly been event marketing. The CEO has taken part in national and international fairs, and maintained lead generating and networking through face-to-face meetings with future prospects. She has made many contacts at these fairs, but they haven't really developed to anything more since then, partially due to lack of time. Current retailers are small business owners located around Finland, who sell the case company's products along with other brands' products. In Helsinki the case company has a bigger retailer, but the similar situation with many brands located in the same store affect the sales. As the case company wants to grow, especially internationally but also to gain bigger, well-known retailers in Finland such as Stockmann, something besides event marketing needs to be done. The CEO finds event marketing very time consuming and is hoping to find an alternative for networking with potential new retailers as well as lead generating. Customer relationship management (CRM) is yet another responsibility of the CEO, yet she maintains good relations with the current retailers by meeting them infrequently. Having to meet the retailers face-to-face also requires time and having an easier way to contact also current retailers would be necessary for the company. However being a small entrepreneurial company, there is no need for big or expansive CRM system but rather something to keep in touch with the retailers.

3.2 Starting with the account building

The Company Page is managed by one or more personal profiles and therefore the account building starts with optimizing the profiles of the key user or users. The first thing however is to decide, who the key users are. As the case company is very small, the key user will eventually be the CEO of the company and the Company Page is built through her profile. As the thesis worker will be implementing the account building as well as producing and publishing content for the Company Page, the thesis workers profile is just as important to be optimized. Administrative rights were given to the CEO as well as the thesis worker. The role of the thesis worker is to optimize the LinkedIn Company Page by producing valuable and interesting content but as the process is short, the networking and

main lead generating through groups and direct contacting is left for the CEO. As the thesis worker is only working for the case company during the implementation process the valuable process of creating connections to future prospects should be left to a permanent member and the person representing the company, in this case the CEO. The nature of the content and some possible topics are discussed beforehand, as the publishing schedule is relatively tight. It is agreed that the content will be published by the thesis worker in her LinkedIn profile and shared by the case company's Company Page. Some of the content will also be published at the company's web page. The case company CEO wants to see the content before publishing and no strict content publishing calendar is made.

3.2.1 Personal profile

The personal profile of the key persona is highly important, as people prefer to connect with people. Also it is often the first link to any company. In the personal profile it is important to have a professional looking picture, an informative and precise summary of the key persona as well as the industry and the company and relevant key words that optimize the search function in LinkedIn (Shaffer 2011, 38-41). A small but relevant detail is also to alter the personalized URL that acts as a link to the personal profile. LinkedIn creates one automatically, but it gives a more professional outlook to have it personalized. The personalized LinkedIn URL is also a direct link to one's personal profile for non-LinkedIn members. The correct personalized LinkedIn URL is in the form of www.linkedin.com/in/YourName. (Schaffer 2011, 33). Another important thing to optimize in the LinkedIn profile is to get recommendations from colleagues and former employees to different skills. Nothing highlights the expertise of a person like a personal recommendation. (Schaffer 2011, 39.)

For both the case company CEO and the thesis worker, apart from optimizing the personalized URL, there was little to be done. Both profiles had professional pictures and well-formed headlines. The education and work experience sections were informative, but not too long. Especially the CEO profile had a good amount of recommendations in skills, due to long experience in the company's field of business. The CEO however was not a member at many industry related groups, which could enhance the networking and lead generating. She was asked to join groups that were relevant from the company's perspective as well as interesting to her, as the groups require active participation in discussion and sharing knowledge. The CEO sent out requests to join groups but it took two to three weeks for some groups to accept her as a member. The thesis worker joined groups related to digital and social media marketing, as her expertise on the company's field of business was minimal. Both key personas' profiles were missing the summaries that should include key words related to the industry and field of business, to enhance the search engine op-

timization inside LinkedIn. Both the CEO and the thesis worker were to write descriptive and informative summaries of themselves.

3.2.2 Company Page

The Company Page building begun by choosing a logo and a banner picture for the profile - both highly important for the visual impact of the Company Page. The logo should be the actual company logo or something very recognisable that immediately associates with the company. The banner picture can be more visual and descriptive, perhaps showing the products of the company. (Schaffer 2011, 66.) For the case company the logo picture that appears on all the posts and updates of the company the official logo was chosen with the company name entitled. The banner picture was more visual and it showcased the company products in an untraditional way, catching the eye of the viewer immediately. It brought out well the actual products but wasn't merely a product picture. The banner photo was taken by a professional photographer, as all LinkedIn published pictures of the company products should be.

The company description is a very important part of the Company Page, as it tells the story of the company itself: the industry, the expertise and the values of the company. Both the description as well as the Specialties sections beneath should be keyword optimized. This is even more important for the Company Page as it is for the personal profile. Having keywords appear in the description and the Specialties section enhances the search engine optimization (SEO) inside LinkedIn and can make all the difference in lead generating. (Schaffer 2011, 66.) The keywords for the case company were chosen by the CEO and the thesis worker together. The keywords chosen were: interior décor, jewellery, design and Nordic design. These keywords were chosen in the Specialties section as well as included in the description text. Later the same keywords would be included in the company posts and updates. The company description tells a short story of the company background introduces the product lines as well as presents the values of the company: local producing, ethical sourcing and ecological manufacturing.

Adding the company details such as industry, company type, company size and the year founded are important parts of the profile building. But having relevant contact information published is even more important. Even if the potential prospects find the company in LinkedIn, it is not enough to lead to business deals without relevant contact information. As LinkedIn allows searching for potential business partners using a ZIP code, having the address there can make all the difference. However as the case company operates at the location of the CEO's home, she did not want the address details public, and LinkedIn doesn't allow to merely publishing the country and the ZIP code without the full address.

Therefore it was decided that the address was not published. There was a link to the company's web page, where the post box details of the company can be found. Naturally this won't assist the ZIP code search in LinkedIn but at least the contact information is to be found when necessary. The email-address and phone number of the CEO are available at her personal profile. This enhances the chance of connecting with future prospects.

3.3 Content is the key

Content marketing was the main form of business-to-business (b2b) marketing to be used in this thesis project, as there was no advertising budget. Suitable topics were discussed and agreed on beforehand together with the CEO of the company and the thesis worker. The topics needed to be related to the company and its industry, but still interesting to a wider public in order to get more clicks, shares and likes. Another important aspect was the visuality of the content and the thesis worker was admitted access to product pictures of the case company, for them to be used in the published articles. The form of the content published was chosen to be mainly articles, as there was a limited time for the implementation. There was too little time to film and edit videos or similar publications, in order for them to be used. At the very beginning of the implementation process there was a minor setback, when it turned out that there was no platform at the Company Page to publish any sort of larger posts, merely updates (LinkedIn Help 2016d). Therefore it was chosen that the content to be published would be posted through the case company's English web site in the company blog and then shared in LinkedIn Company Page as an update. Another option was to use LinkedIn Pulse. In LinkedIn Pulse all the publications are to be done through a personal profile and it was chosen to be the thesis workers profile, as she was producing the content.

Initial search was made on the publishing schedule to see, what was the best date and time to publish content. Lasse Rouhiainen (21 April 2016) mentioned in his interview that the quality of the content is more important than the frequency. However it does matter, what day the publication is made and at what time. Because LinkedIn is so business like in its nature, most people, especially the target audience of the thesis project implementation, operate in LinkedIn during business hours. According to one of Hubspots blogs (Stec 7 January 2016), the best time to publish in LinkedIn is Thursday followed by Sunday. Another Hubspot blog (Kolowich, 6 January 2016) suggests the best time to post is on Tuesday between 10 am and 11 am. Other preferred times were Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in the morning, during lunch and after work. During the implementation there was no strict publishing calendar used, instead the publishing was done at different times of the day and at different days of the week to see if there was any impact on the amount of the views or the engagement percentage. During the implementation process if

became clear that not all above mentioned weekdays were preferable to the case company. Also the short period of the implementation can only give suggestions of the best possible publications dates, as the published content has gathered impressions, views and interactions also after the implementation period had already ended.

3.3.1 Articles/Blog posts

During the implementation period of 30 days, seven articles were posted in LinkedIn in the Company Page. Posts were made as an update that shared original content either from LinkedIn Pulse or the company's own blog at their own website. All seven articles' topics were somehow related either directly to the company products or representing the values of the company. As in content marketing the idea is not to advertise, the articles were discussing topics in a general level, but using the case company as an example. For instance the second most viewed articles suggested ideas on how to come up with names for different products. The case company was used as an example on how the names of their products had been made up. Yet the topic was interesting to a larger audience, as the topic of coming up with suitable product names, is common to all companies from different industries. Even though the initial goal in content marketing is to reach a specific target audience, especially in the beginning when the company has low brand recognition, it is important to gather a lot of impressions and views, in order to gain more followers. Followers are very important to the company (Rouhiainen 21 April 2016). As was discovered during the thesis project, more followers mean more interactions (shares, likes) which means again more impressions and views, as the network of the follower can be then utilised. In LinkedIn all the shares and likes made by a user become visible to their personal network. This makes it possible for more people to see articles and posts made by companies or individuals that otherwise have no connection.

In order to gain as many views and interactions as possible, the article has to be interesting. Not too short but too long. Lasse Rouhiainen (21 April 2016) mentions in his interview that a post of 1000 words is a good length for content published in social media. According to Hubspots blog (Stec, 7 January 2016) the best received posts have more than three paragraphs. These expert opinions suggest that the posts have to be long enough to cover the topic well, but not too long. Based on personal observation, in many cases social media platforms such as LinkedIn or Facebook are used with a mobile device, which suggests that the reading has to be easy also from the small screen. Also the time being used on a specific platform is often divided at several shorter periods, which also suggests that a post has to be short enough to be read during that time. One of the most important things in creating an effective article or blog post is the headline. Most experts recom-

mend so called “how to”-articles or using listing in the title e.g. 8 tips on improving LinkedIn marketing. (Stec 7 January 2016.) In a social media marketing virtual course by Lasse Rouhiainen, he also recommends using these methods in creating headlines. These types of headlines were also tried out during the implementation process, to test out the actual effect of a specific title.

3.3.2 Video posts

During the interview of Lasse Rouhiainen (21 April 2016) mentioned that using videos in content marketing can be very productive. After all a person remembers 80% of what he or she sees or does and only 10% of what one hears. According to Hubspot blog (Kolowich, 14 June 2016) 96% of business-to-business (b2b) companies use videos in some way in their marketing, and 73% of them said it had a positive impact on their return on investment (ROI). Without a doubt using videos in content marketing is truly effective, as the video can withhold a lot more information in a shorter period of time than it would take for a person to read that information. Based on personal observation and experience in LinkedIn people tend to share more videos than they do articles. Therefore it can be deduced that videos gather more interactions than articles. According to Hubspot blog (Kolowich 14 June 2016), that is the case, as 92% of people watching mobile videos, share them with others. Based on Kolowich’s blog post, videos are highly important to be used in content marketing.

During the implementation process there was no possibility to start making videos for content marketing purposes due to lack of time, resources and money. The case company however had a video previously made for them as a school project. The video was short overview of some of the company’s products, mainly jewellery. The script writing, making and editing of the video was all done by a group of Haaga-Helia students. Once the video was shared through the Company Page as an update, the CEO of the company send a note to the students involved in making of the video, whom then shared the video on their personal profiles. The video gathered the most interactions (shares, likes and comments) of all the posts made during the implementation. One of the reasons could be involving third party members (makers of the video) in the content published. Another reason is that it also gained the most views, therefore reached the most people. As it was the first post of the implementation, the video content had more time to gather impressions. Impressions refer to the amount of people, who have seen the post in their LinkedIn updates newsfeed. Views refer to the amount of clicks the posts has gathered that is to say, how many have actually opened up the article or video to see what it includes. However the percentage on engagement was only the third largest. This is due to the reason that during the implementation process, the video, being the first publication, therefore being in

LinkedIn newsfeed the longest, gathered the most impressions. This reduced the engagement process even if the video had the most interactions.

3.4 Results of content creation

The process of content creation was somewhat challenging as the topics needed to be industry related but still interesting enough for a larger crowd. The articles were supposed to tell about the company and present its products, but not to advertise directly, as it is not the purpose of content marketing. As the thesis worker didn't have any personal experience from the industry, the topics were discussed together with the CEO. Companies such as Snö of Sweden or Marimekko, who also are Nordic design companies manufacturing jewellery and interior décor items, are not active in LinkedIn. They each have LinkedIn Company Pages, but produce no content. Therefore it was hard to find comparison or ideas from other companies.

The publishing was done either using the blog in the company's own English web page or by publishing through the personal profile of the thesis worker in LinkedIn Pulse. In both cases the content was then shared by the thesis worker, the CEO and as an update in the Company Page, to ensure maximum visibility. There was discussion of trying out paid advertisement by sponsoring the updates in the Company Page to gain more visibility to the content, but due to the short implementation period it was never tried out. In content marketing the existing brand recognition seemed to be important, as gaining new followers merely through producing content was difficult and required a lot of activity from the thesis worker and the CEO to engage the existing followers to share and like. All in all the content marketing went well as it gave some insight on what to do and what to avoid regarding the actual content as well as the publishing frequency and time. This information is valuable for future activities and presence in LinkedIn, as there was no comparison at the start of the implementation. However a longer implementation period would most likely have given even better insight on content marketing to this particular case company and its industry.

All the results presented are based on LinkedIn's own analytics that collects data based on impressions, clicks, interactions and engagement percentage. Impressions mean the amount of people who have seen the article in their own profile's newsfeed. All content that is made available to the public, will appear in the newsfeed of a user, when a connection of a user has either, liked, commented or shared an update in their own page. Therefore the amount of impressions grows, whenever the article manages to gather engagement. The engagement percentage is then calculated based on the impressions and the interactions the content has received. Interactions mean the amount of people who have

shared, commented or liked the content. Clicks mean the amount of people who have actually opened up the content seen in an update e.g. an article that was shared by the company.

3.4.1 Clicks and interactions

The social media marketing experts recommended using “how to” –articles and listings, as according to studies they gained more clicks from the users. During the implementation process different style of headlines were tried out. One of the titles used “how to”, another gave “5 tips” and a third article used both of them in the headline. The remaining articles’ headlines were not specifically designed. As can be seen in the figure 6, the results of the implementation also prove that these types of headlines worked well for the case company, as the articles that gained the most clicks were the once with these types of headlines. The first article, however received 10 clicks even though the headline itself wasn’t based on these expert advice. Instead the topic itself was found interesting enough to lure viewers to click on it. The article discussed about the companies values and willingness to produce their products in Finland, despite the bigger manufacturing costs. The ethical sourcing and locality aspect of the article seemed to interest many people and gathered interactions from LinkedIn users, who were part of the network of the thesis worker, but were not followers of the company. Therefore it can be deducted that the topic and its relate ability was more important in content creating than the actual headline. The content to receive the most clicks was the video, which proves that videos are always more interesting to people than articles, as they are quicker and easier to browse through. The article that gained the least clicks was an article posted during the weekend of national graduation celebration, which meant there was very few people active in LinkedIn.

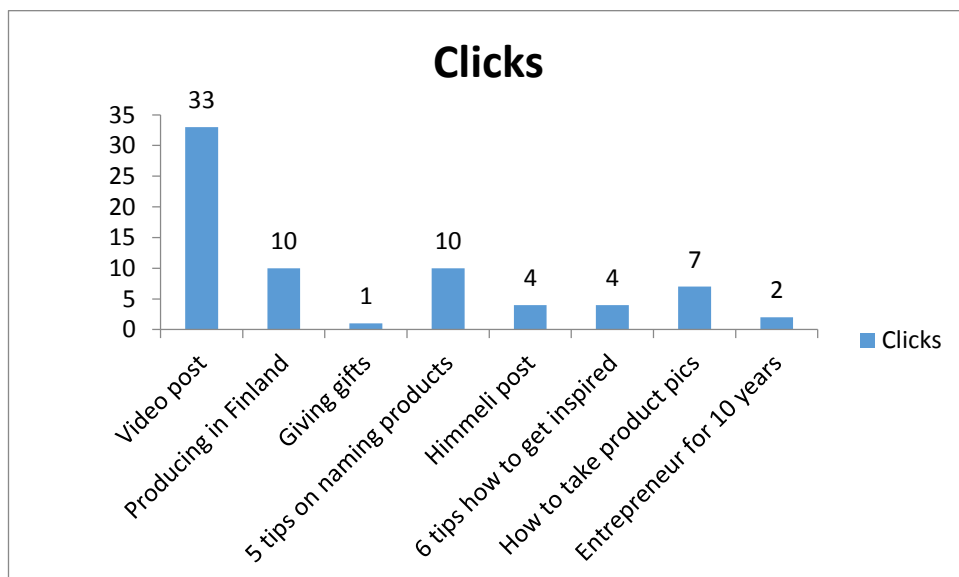


Figure 6. The amount of clicks the posts received.

The three posts that gained the most interactions were also the ones that got the most clicks as is seen in figure 7. This means that once the article is interesting enough, it will increase engagement by getting people to share and comment on it. However there are exceptions to that rule. The third post received only one click, but gathered seven interactions, which means that people have shared or liked it without actually reading in through. Based on personal observance this is fairly common in social media, as people tend to act on a post merely by reading the headline, without actually paying much attention to the content. Nevertheless this should not be considered a good strategy for increasing engagement, as the content is still more important, when the actual target group is reached. The content presents the expertise of the company and should not be based only on a luring headline, even if they are important as well. It can be deducted based on these statistics that the amount of clicks seem to have a direct effect on the amount of interactions, despite of few exceptions. The content and the headline have a huge impact on the clicks, which has a major impact on interactions. Therefore it is important to pay attention to the quality of the content published.

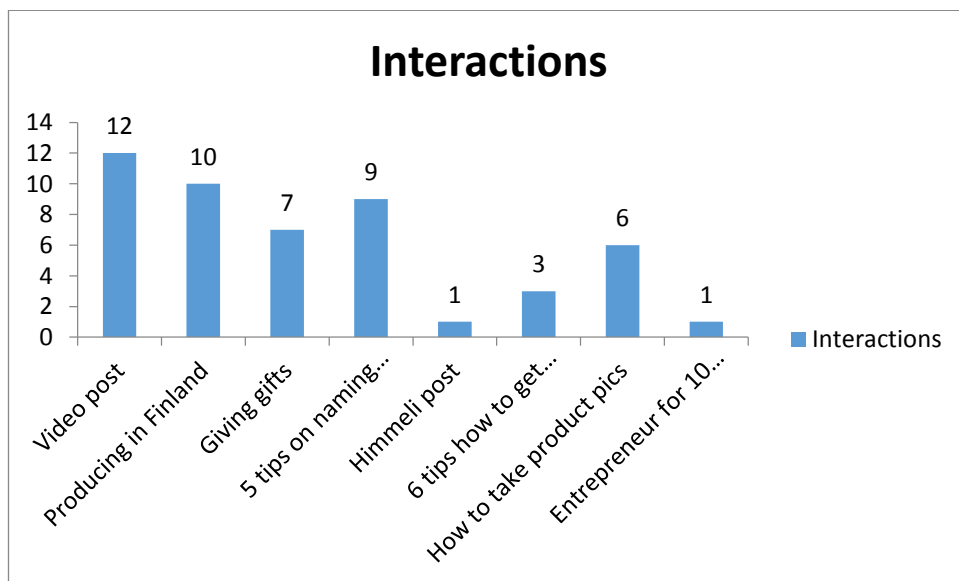


Figure 7. The amount of interactions received by the posts.

3.4.2 From impressions to engagement

Impression means the amount of people who have seen the post in their LinkedIn news-feed. The longer the post is available in LinkedIn the bigger the amount of impressions is. Therefore impression does not tell much about the quality of the content nor the level of interest people have for it. The clicks and the interactions are a better measurement for

the actual quality of the content. Another measurement that LinkedIn Analytics uses to measure the success of content marketing is the engagement percentage. Engagement percentage is calculated based on the amount of impressions versus the amount of interactions. Even though engagement is important in content marketing in order to get more visibility, having a post shared several times increases the amount of impressions, as the post becomes available to all the connections of the person who has shared, commented or liked a post. The increasing amount of impressions reduces the engagement percentage, as the amount of people interacting to the post stays more or less the same. Therefore the engagement percentage doesn't give a reliable measurement of the success of a particular published content. However at larger scale it could be used as a guideline to see what type of content is best suited for a particular company and target audience.

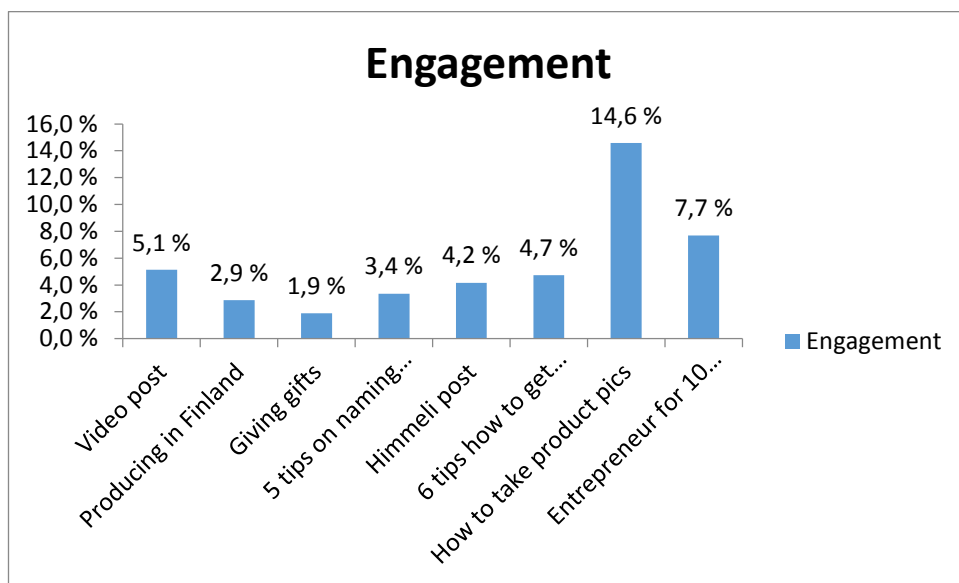


Figure 8. The level of engagement percentage.

In figure 8 we can see that the video had the biggest engagement percentage, despite the fact that it was published first, therefore was available in LinkedIn the longest. This increased the number of impressions. As the amount of interactions was also high, the engagement percentage stayed high, compared to other posts. The last two posts have the highest engagement percentage but this is mainly due to the fact that they were published last and didn't gain that many impressions during the implementation process. Based on engagement process, it can be deduced that again the video was the most preferable method of content marketing and should be used more frequently.

3.4.3 Publishing frequency

The amount of impressions varies, based on the publishing date and time. As can be seen in figure 9, the articles that were posted over the weekend gained less impressions than

those published during the week. Even though the third post (Giving gifts) was available in LinkedIn longer than the fourth post (5 tips on naming...) it received fewer impressions due to the publishing date. The third post was made on Sunday the weekend of national graduation ceremonies, which reduced people's activity in LinkedIn. The same goes with the fifth post about Himmeli and the sixth post about "how to get inspired". The other one was published during the weekend and the other one on Tuesday. Based on the impressions the best to publish was in fact Tuesday followed by Wednesday. The time of the day had little meaning to the amount impressions, although posts that were published late in the evening, received impressions only the next day. Even though Hubspot's blog (Kowlich, 6 January 2016) recommended Sunday for publishing content, based on the implementation it was not a preferred time to publish for the case company. This can be either a culture thing, as the studies were made in the USA or the case companies followers preferred to use LinkedIn only during the working hours. Therefore it can be deducted that the best publishing date for each company depends on the market and the target group.

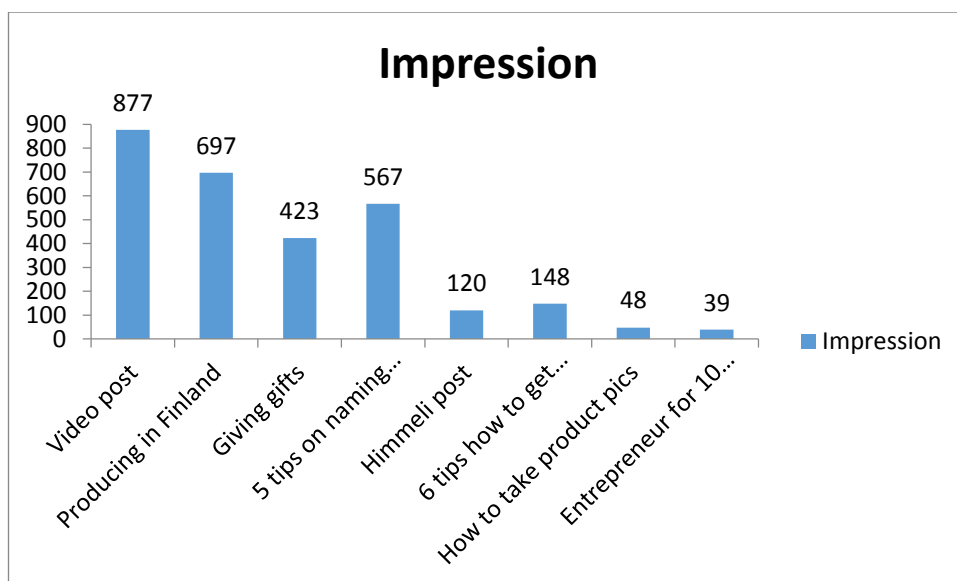


Figure 9. The amount of impressions of each post.

Over time the amount of impressions keep on growing, but it no longer has effect on the amount of clicks or interactions. That means that the content is more lucrative when it is fresh. Therefore activity and consistency in LinkedIn are highly important for gaining new followers and assuring that the company is visible to potential partners. Producing new and interesting content to LinkedIn continuously assures that people stay interested and are engaged to the company.

3.4.4 Gaining followers through content marketing

Followers were gained through content marketing but it also required activity from the thesis worker & the CEO. Gaining followers without existing brand recognition is very difficult, as was discovered during the implementation process. Well-known Nordic designer brands like Marimekko have a lot of followers in LinkedIn, despite their lack of content marketing or almost any activity at all. A company unknown to a wider public has to make effort in gaining followers. During the implementation process the followers were gained gradually and the amount grew after every publication, as can be seen in figure 10. However the amount of followers was a lot smaller than expected. As the articles were published through LinkedIn Pulse, quick links to the company's web page and LinkedIn page were submitted inside the text whenever the company's name was mentioned. Also invitations to follow the company in LinkedIn were added after every publication to increase the number of followers.

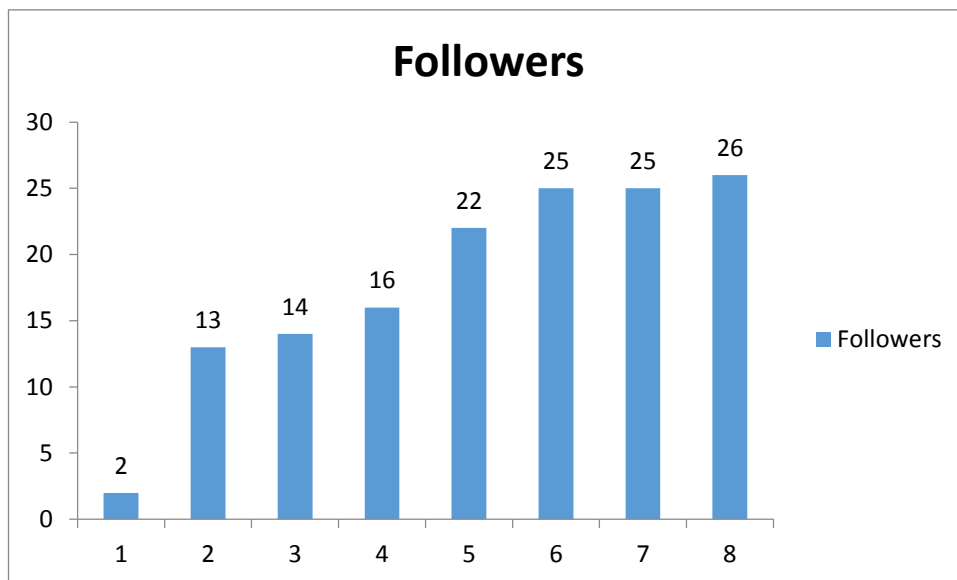


Figure 10. The amount of followers gained after every published content.

The thesis worker send personal invites through personal messaging for their own network to follow the case company in LinkedIn. This increased the amount of followers a bit, but still the amount stayed small compared to the amount of invites. According to Lasse Rouhiainen (21 April 2016) it is wise to use other social media channels to advertise the newly opened Company Page in LinkedIn. Both the company's own web page and the Facebook page mentioned that the case company was active in LinkedIn but it didn't have the needed effect. The "follow-button" was never added to the company's own web page, which could have increased the number of followers a bit. This is recommendable to be done in the future. The thesis worker recommended the CEO to use her existing LinkedIn

network to invite people directly to follow the case company in LinkedIn. This was never taken into use, even though it is likely to have a positive effect on the amount of LinkedIn followers. As the CEO already has connections to retailers and potential business partners, inviting them to follow the case company in LinkedIn is highly recommended in the future.

3.5 Final outcomes

The final results of the implementation process were a Company Page built according to some of the recommendations of the experts. Not everything was implemented as the time frame of the implementation period was only one month. The case company's Company Page gathered 27 followers, had published 8 updates including different content, which gathered interactions from both followers of the case company and from the network of the thesis worker or the CEO. Even though the measurable results of the implementation period were fairly small, mainly due to lack of time, some other results were gained as well. At the very end of the implementation period the CEO had gained new connections from the head purchaser of Stockmann, a big Finnish retail chain. The CEO also gained new connections to her personal profile, where she also published the content as updates, from representatives of different national medias and some of her previous clients. Even though these are not direct results of the implementation, the activity of the case company in LinkedIn led to the activity in the CEO's personal profile, which then led to the results mentioned. According to the CEO these connections were reached due to the implementation process.

Another important outcome of the implementation was not only to establish presence in LinkedIn but also to show the CEO of the company what type of possibilities business-to-business marketing in LinkedIn could open up to the company. As the thesis worker produced content to the Company Page, the CEO gained a better understanding of the content marketing in social media platforms, specifically in LinkedIn. The CEO mentioned that she learned a lot about LinkedIn as a channel during the process. She got excited about producing content to LinkedIn and mentioned that she wanted to continue producing it herself. The future possibilities that LinkedIn may bring to the CEO and the case company, can be held as a success factor to the implementation process, as long as the activity in LinkedIn remains frequent. After all everything got started due to this thesis project.

3.6 Summary

The initial goal of the thesis project was to create an effectively working LinkedIn account for a case company, specialized in Nordic style interior décor and jewellery. The case

company has a desire to go global through a network of international retailers. So far the networking with future prospects has been maintained by the CEO by taking part in international fairs and making connections with relevant people. This however is very time consuming and requires a lot of resources and time also after the fair. Also reaching a larger global audience through event marketing is challenging if not impossible for a small company permanently employing only the CEO. Due to these reasons the case company needed to find an easier way to generate leads and create networks with future prospects. The thesis worker suggested using LinkedIn as a channel for business-to-business marketing and due to financial limitations the marketing was chosen to be organic.

The final goal of the project was to gain leads and connect with future prospects, however due to the shortness of the implementation period; these final results were not guaranteed. During the thesis project the first steps towards these final goals were taken by creating the effectively working LinkedIn account which included producing interesting and relevant content for the case company, for content marketing purposes. During this content publishing period, different publishing dates and times were tried out as well as variation in the actual content. Despite the recommendations of the experts not all methods were suitable for the case company and not all publishing times were ideal either. For example it was noted during the implementation that Sundays were bad times to publish content, despite of the recommendation of some of the experts of social media marketing. Also it was noted that continuous and frequent activity ensures interactions for the followers of the case company, which then led to more impressions from potential viewers. As a small company with low brand recognition it was more important to gain the interest of a larger audience rather than to concentrate on producing content for a specifically targeted audience.

During the implementation process there were obstacles that rose from the lack of authority to make individual decisions on content publishing as well as engaging the company network. Both of which affected the implementation process in a negative way. The lack of authority to publish content without the permission of the company CEO for example, led to missing certain publishing deadlines resulting on the low engagement of followers. These obstacles however also gave insight on what to avoid in the future, in order to enhance the click through rates. A better preparation and a longer period of implementation could've helped to overcome these obstacles. Also having a well-planned publishing calendar would've most likely helped both the thesis worker as well as the CEO in the content producing and publishing difficulties.

The implementation project started on 1st of June and ended 1st of July. During that time one video and seven articles were published for content marketing purposes. Each piece of content gave information to the viewers about the case company but also about the industry. The final number of followers gained by the case company was low compared to the expectations. After all the case company is active in Facebook and Instagram as well, with a relatively good number of followers and likers. As LinkedIn offers little assistance in gaining followers by blocking the most common ways to do organic marketing: using fake accounts and holding competitions, the amounts of followers is naturally smaller. In LinkedIn it is not about quantity as much as quality, but to reach certain people – the target audience, requires brand recognition which is only reached by creating brand awareness through larger audience. All in all, the thesis project was a valuable lesson for both the CEO and the thesis worker, and hopefully in the future this learning's result to something bigger.

4 Discussion

Even though the results gained during the implementation period were small in quantity, they still gave an understanding on what to do and what to avoid in the future. The company now has a LinkedIn Company Page built according to recommendations. The CEO as well as thesis worker have gained a better understanding on what it takes to do business-to-business (b2b) marketing in LinkedIn. Even though the initial goal was not to create leads to the case company, as it turned out the CEO managed to connect with potential prospects, media representatives and former clients. This already proves that the thesis project was important for the case company and is a good starting point for future activities in LinkedIn for business-to-business marketing purposes. The results based on the analytics of LinkedIn are not completely reliable as the quantities stayed so small. However they can be considered to stand as examples of the results of certain actions.

4.1 Conclusions

Based on the results of the thesis project implementation the following conclusions were made:

1. **Establish brand recognition.** Existing brand recognition makes establishing presence in LinkedIn easier as it is possible to gain followers merely with the brand. A company with low brand recognition can overcome the challenge of finding followers but it requires a lot of work and activity from the company in the form of content creation, grouping and networking.
2. **“Content is the king”** (Kabani 2010, 28). Even though the publishing day and time is important in optimizing the click through rates, the content is still the most important thing in content marketing. The content has to be relevant, interesting and informing in order to attract viewers. A luring headline can help to gain clicks but the content is what creates conversions.
3. **A picture is worth a thousand words.** People remember better what they see or hear than what they read. Publishing videos and adding pictures to articles as visual impacts can improve the click through rates. In social media people have a shorter concentration span than in traditional media and the message has to be delivered quickly. A video is more effective than an article as it can withhold more information in a shorter period of time.
4. **Be active.** Being present in LinkedIn is hardly ever enough. Activity is really important. Publishing content is a good start but being truly active means also commenting on other people’s posts, especially in industry related groups. LinkedIn Groups are the best places to network with people in the same industry and an effective form of lead generating. Being active means also being reactive. When someone comments, shares or likes the content, it is important to reply.
5. **Plan ahead, stick to schedule.** In every project it is vital to have a clear plan. When publishing content in social media platforms for marketing purposes, having a publishing calendar can be a huge help. It assures that the publishing is always done at the preferable hour and that the publishing stays frequent.

Lead generating in LinkedIn is possible even for a small company, with small financial resources. However it requires a lot of work and commitment to gain similar results.

LinkedIn offers the contact information of all the possible people, who would otherwise be hard to find and connect with. Still due to the code of conduct contacting them is a bit trickier and requires consistency and time.

4.2 Recommendations

The thesis project gave valuable insight on creating an effective LinkedIn Company Page as well as ways on engaging followers, networking with future prospects and creating content for marketing purposes. The implementation period for the project was short, and not all recommended activities were able to take into use. Also some of the activities that are important should be done by the key persona of the company in the case of the case company, the CEO. As the thesis worker does not work in the industry of the case company she couldn't offer the knowledge and information valuable for leads and prospects that for example could be found in industry related groups. That's why it is important for the CEO to activate herself in the LinkedIn Groups. Suggesting topics, commenting on posts and raising questions in suitable Groups can enhance the possibility to catch the eye of a potential prospect. Generally it is recommended that the CEO of the case company would be more active towards potential prospects as well as existing contacts that are not yet in her LinkedIn connections or followers of the Company Page. Activity in LinkedIn is vital for gaining leads and contacting them directly might also be a good idea according to Lasse Rouhiainen (21 April 2016). As the case company already has a list of emails of people ordering the company newsletter, these contacts could be used in LinkedIn by inviting them to follow the case company in LinkedIn.

Adapting the Lead Generator by paying for a LinkedIn Premium account can be very helpful in finding the right people from the right retailing companies. The Lead Generator was adapted for a trial period by the thesis worker, to see what kind of features it offered. However for finding suitable contacts, it is first important to make a strategy and define which retailing companies at which markets are the most suitable ones for the case company. As this information was not available during the implementation period, the Lead Generator was not taken into use. Once the case company knows which retailing companies to contact, the Lead Generator can help to find the purchaser and supply managers of these companies. It can also help to find more options for retailing companies from different markets based on industry. Once the right people are found, the Premium account also offers a way of directly contacting them using LinkedIn Inmail. Once again activity also in this sector is really important in lead generating. As the case company already has retailers and business partners who might be also active in LinkedIn, it would be beneficial to contact them directly, invite them to follow the case company in LinkedIn as well as add them as contacts in the CEO's LinkedIn account. Through the existing contacts new con-

tacts can be found also by networking and actively commenting their updates and giving recommendations on their LinkedIn Company Pages.

As the Company Page has now published content, it is recommended that this content marketing is continued frequently. To assist the publishing adapting a publishing calendar can assure that the publishing stays consistent and viewers and followers stay active. Frequent relevant content is the best way to engage followers and more followers means more visibility. As the case company is already active in Facebook and Instagram and has a blog in the company's web page, LinkedIn would be a very suitable part of that social media marketing mix and staying active in LinkedIn might also have a positive impact on the number of followers in other platforms. Since the case company has a Twitter account it would be wise to include the Twitter account in the Company Page and have the company blog RSS directly included in LinkedIn Company Page (Schaffer 2011, 66). This reduces the amount of publishing as some publications are shared then automatically. It might be also beneficial to sponsor updates in LinkedIn, which means paying to make the posts and updates visible for a longer period for a wider public. This was not tried out during the implementation period, so the effects are not tested. It might be wise to try it for a short period, to see whether it will bring any extra value for the case company or not. For the actual Company Page it is wise to add a Showcase page where the company can present the wide selection of company products. As the case company has many well-taken product pictures and the visible effect of the products is important, having Showcase page can assure that the potential prospects can familiarize themselves with the product line without having to visit the company's web page. With these actions, the case company can get the most out of the LinkedIn account and assure that the lead generating leads to gaining new business partners and eventually going global.

4.3 Reflection of my learning's

The whole thesis project was like a course on project management. Only there were very few instructions available and very little help - very unlike school and very much like life. I learned a lot about the topic itself as I was studying for the theory part of the thesis. I learned to optimize my own LinkedIn page as well as the case companies. What type of content to write and how to engage people? And how nothing should be taken for granted, especially not the followers, the likers and the clients of a company. Naturally I learned about business-to-business marketing and how LinkedIn could be used to endorse lead generating. But my most valuable learning was about project management and specifically time management, scheduling and planning ahead.

In the beginning of the thesis planning course I had made up a very strict schedule on my thesis writing and implementing, as I wanted to have my thesis finished before I return to work from my maternity leave. I was supposed to have the theory ready by the end of May as the implementation was to start in June. July and August are summer holiday season and would have been very poor choices for implementation, as not many people would be active in work-related LinkedIn. After the implementation I was to write third and fourth part of my thesis before I returned to work in September. But as it turned out life doesn't care about your schedule and nor does it follow it. Many things happened to me during the summer that hinged the thesis writing process, to the point where I returned to work and had less than half of the thesis done. This is what it's going to be in work-life as well, and so it is according to my experience. No matter how carefully something is planned, life happens and the schedule changes. This is something that has to be accepted in advance and avoid too tight schedules. There needs to be room for change, for mistakes and setbacks and everything that despite of carefully planning were unexpected.

I also learned that it would've been far more important to draft a publishing calendar instead of a thesis project schedule, or why not both. Since this was the first time for me every run an actual big project like this, I can forgive myself for being naïve. Since I didn't have a publishing calendar some of the content published came at the hours of the day that weren't preferable times to publish. But in many cases that was also something that I couldn't effect being a mother of a small child, whose daily routine was far more important than my schedule. Still I have to admit that I could and should have been better prepared. After the thesis planning course was over, I didn't really have enough time to gather as much data about optimizing LinkedIn for business-to-business marketing. Many of the things that are mentioned in this thesis are things that were discovered only after the implementation was over. There were some contradictions on the data found from different sources but with enough time, it would've been possible to go through all the material and discover the best options.

The most valuable lesson wasn't how to create an effective LinkedIn account for business-to-business marketing purposes to this case company or any other company. Not that the data I gathered isn't important. It is, hopefully to the case company as well, but for me too in the future. The most valuable lesson was the one I learned about myself. Despite all the hardship I had to go through in my personal life over the Autumn I was able to finish my thesis in time. It's not as perfect as I wanted it to be, but sometimes in life you have to be able to confront yourself and say, I did my best and that has to be enough. Sometimes your best is the second best, but as long as you did all you can, you should be proud. And I am.

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