

LinkedIn® Ads

Benchmarks Report 2026

by Dreamdata

Why This Is The Most Exciting Time to Be in B2B Marketing

A familiar question comes up in B2B marketing budget reviews:

“We spent money on LinkedIn Ads last month. How much revenue did they generate this month?”

It's a fair question. But is it the right one?

[78% of B2B CMOs](#)¹ say proving ROI has become more important over the past two years. Budgets are scrutinized, every channel is compared, and marketing leaders are expected to show impact - clearly and quickly.

The challenge is, deals don't follow monthly reporting cycles. They're shaped over months, across multiple channels, and often by ten or more stakeholders before sales is even looped in. When we judge performance in one-month increments, we risk undervaluing the very activities that create demand in the first place.

Here's why I think this is actually an exciting moment for B2B marketing: we have the ability to see the full picture by mapping the entire B2B customer journey, from the first touch to closed revenue, and our data shows it takes an average of 272 days from the first marketing touch to closed revenue.

With a complete data foundation, we can see exactly which channels are influencing revenue, not just generating clicks. We can benchmark performance against peers. And we can have better conversations with leadership because we're grounded in real data rather than assumptions.

This report is designed to give you that context. How budgets are shifting, what strong ROAS looks like, how customer journeys are evolving, and where LinkedIn fits into it all.

A word about Dreamdata

Dreamdata is a B2B Activation & Attribution Platform that provides the most complete B2B customer journey map anywhere, empowering marketers to build and activate precise audiences, leverage AI signals, and measure what truly drives revenue.

Best of all, it's easy to implement and built to scale as your KPIs, team, and business grow - keeping your team and leadership aligned around a single clear view of what's working.



Nick Turner

CEO of Dreamdata

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Steffen Hedebrandt

CMO & Co-founder of Dreamdata

Why LinkedIn Ads matter more than ever in B2B

With over 1.3 billion professionals and purpose built solutions, LinkedIn has become the leading channel for B2B marketers to engage buying groups, build trust, and fuel growth.

It's also the only advertising channel built around professional identity and firmographic targeting.

In B2B, where buying decisions involve entire committees and multiple stakeholders inside the same account, that's an important differentiator. This year's data makes that clearer than ever.

LinkedIn now represents 41% of paid social budget share among Dreamdata customers - up 2% year over year - and delivers a 121% return on ad spend (ROAS). At the company level, cost per company closed is 54% more efficient than last year.

What's new this year is that we can see even more. With LinkedIn's Company Intelligence API, organic Company Page impressions can now be connected to company-level revenue influence. When members of a buying group view your Company Page, that activity shows up as a measurable intent signal.

Why we built this report

Last year, we published our LinkedIn Ads Benchmark Report to help B2B marketers understand how their budgets and performance compared across channels. Now we're back comparing this year's results with last year's to see what's changed, what's stayed the same, and what it could mean for B2B marketers.

What this report is built on

This report is built on aggregated campaign data from thousands of Dreamdata customers covering +66 million sessions across +3.5 million customer journeys to uncover the latest trends across B2B advertising platforms.

What you'll find inside

You'll find benchmarks on budget allocation, return on ad spend (ROAS), alongside customer journey data. We'll also demonstrate why company-level measurement is a better way of tracking and measuring the buyer journey as it can accommodate multiple members within the buyer group.

All insights and viewpoints are based on Dreamdata's own analysis and point of view. We encourage you to share your thoughts by tagging [@dreamdata](#) on LinkedIn - we look forward to hearing your opinions!

As a [LinkedIn Marketing Partner](#)² for Signals, Reporting, Audiences and Attribution, Dreamdata empowers B2B marketers to analyze and activate their go-to-market data, ensuring their LinkedIn Ads drive measurable impact across the entire customer journey.

81% of the B2B customer journey takes place before the sales pipeline

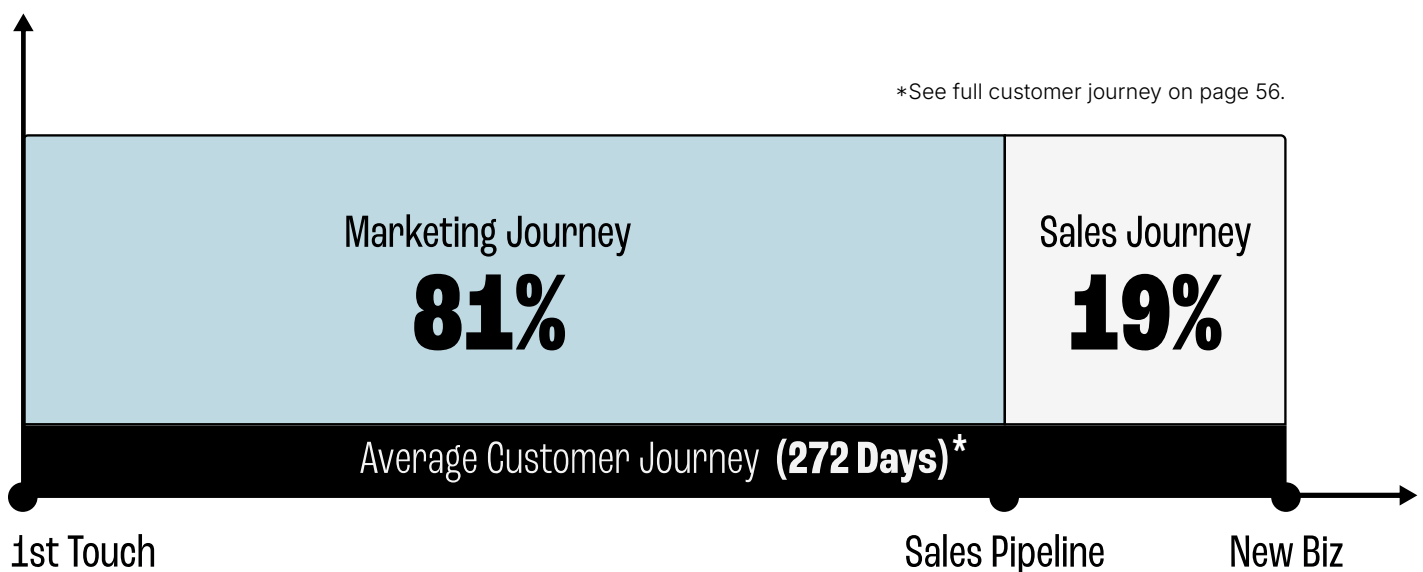
Just one year ago, that number was 70%.

That's an 11-point shift toward buyer self-education in a single year, showing that the B2B customer journey continues to move outside the realm of sales people.

Today a deal is often won or lost before you know it's begun. For over seven months, marketing is responsible for turning cold prospects into warm, sales-ready deals. 81% of a prospect's journey is

spent researching, consuming content, and forming opinions. It's the longest and most influential part of the customer journey, and it's also the least visible with traditional reporting platforms.

Why? This nurturing phase can be a "black box" because CRMs are not built to track multiple anonymous touchpoints or connect early engagement to a deal that closes half a year later.



The goal of this report is simple:

Without reliable benchmarks, it's easy to underinvest in demand creation or misjudge the true impact of marketing activities.

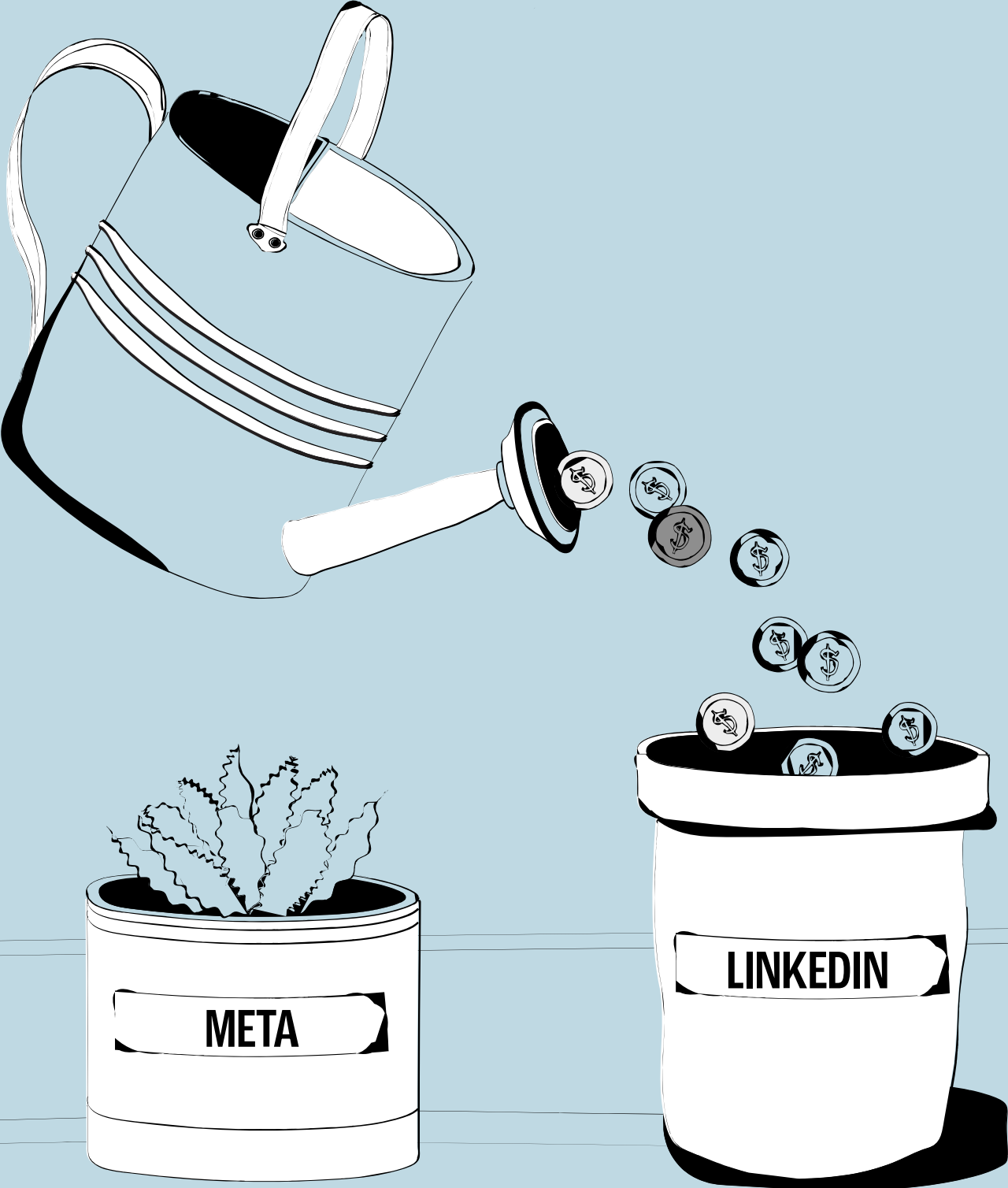
We're here to help you understand what "good" looks like - so you gain more confidence in your strategy.

You'll be able to highlight that top of funnel activity does in fact influence revenue outcomes.

And, you'll be able to answer the questions that you face every day:

- How much should we be investing - and where?
- Which channels influence buyers before they convert?
- How long do customer journeys really take?
- What does strong performance look like beyond clicks and leads?

B2B Ad Budget



Where are ad budgets spent?

In this section, we explore the latest budget allocation trends and benchmarks to help guide smarter investment decisions.

But how are today's B2B marketers actually dividing their budgets? How has spend on LinkedIn Ads changed over the last 12 months? How does your own budget compare? And are you underspending on high-value channels or pouring too much into others?



How have budgets shifted in 2025?

Spending on LinkedIn Ads as a percentage of the total ad budget, when compared to 2024, gives us a strong indicator that it remains a large and steadily growing budget.

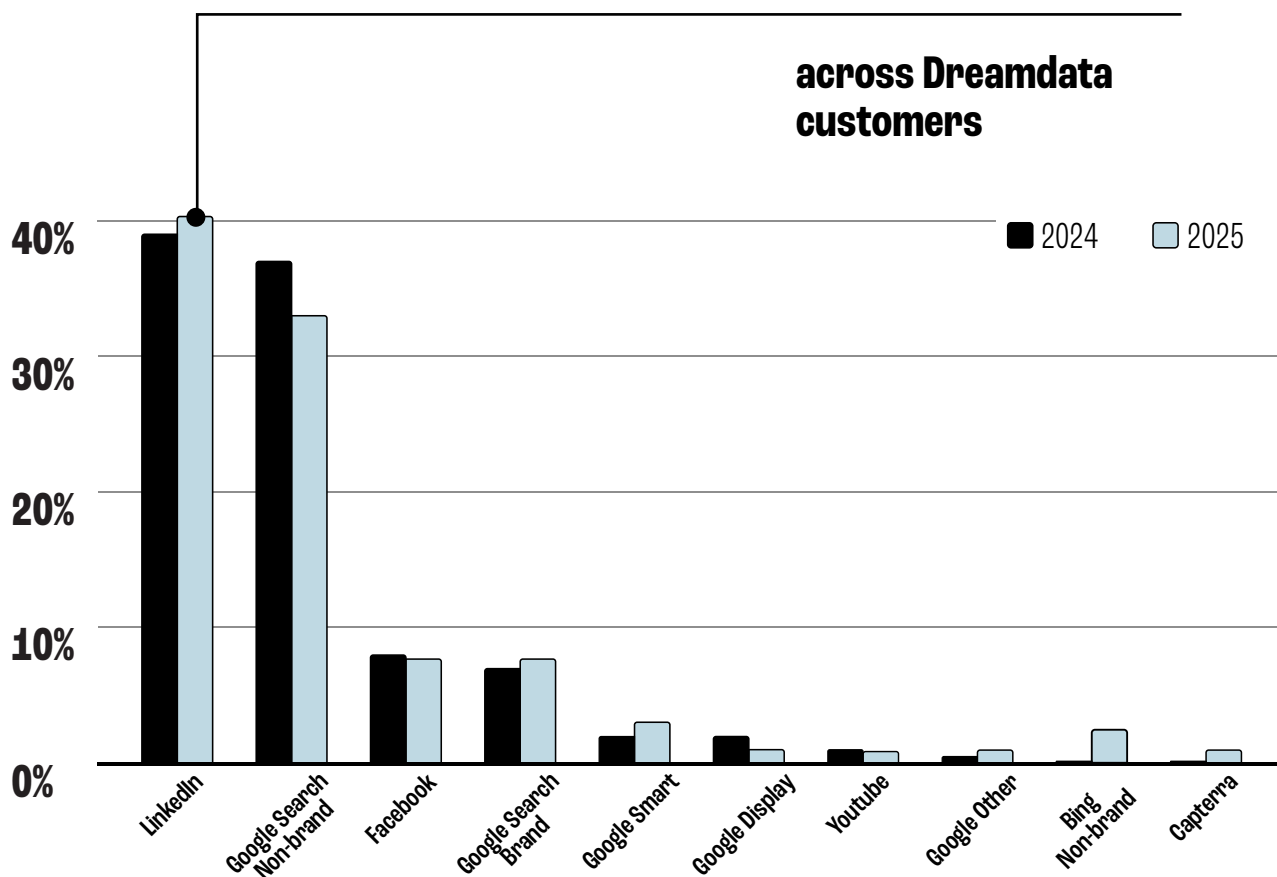
Moving from 39% in 2024, to 41% in 2025, this change may be small, but it certainly matters.

While LinkedIn's ad spend is short of the 46% spent on the entire Google Network, if we break down spend on Google by each network (Search, Display, etc.), we find that LinkedIn still takes the largest single ad spend.

LinkedIn Ads remains the single largest ad spend at

41%

across Dreamdata customers



46%

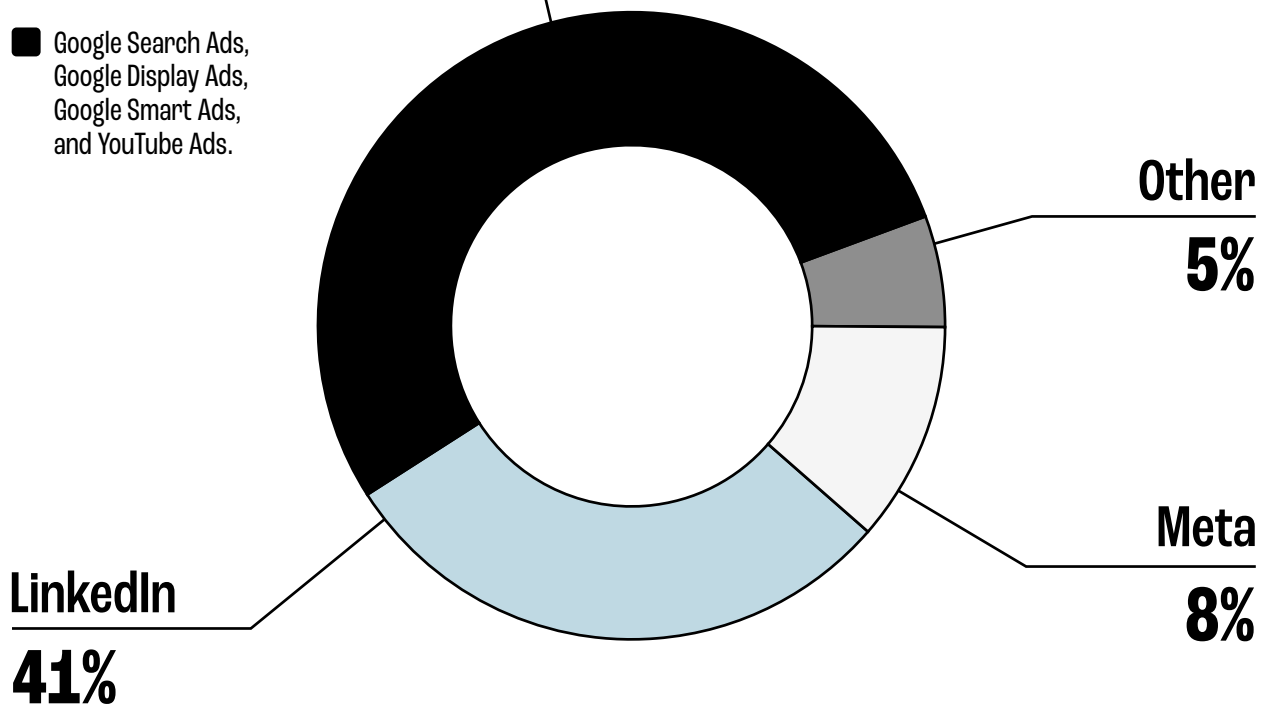
of budgets are spent on the Google Network


Across the customer data analyzed, almost half of B2B marketing ad budget is still spent on the Google Network which includes Google Search Ads, Google Display Ads, Google Smart Ads, and YouTube Ads.

This investment reflects the continued priority marketers place on capturing existing demand on the largest web browser. However, there are nuances within the breakdown. While Google Search Ads (branded and non-branded) continue to take the most budget, this investment has dropped [from 44% to 41% of all ad spend](#)³.

We explain why on page 14.

■ Google Search Ads, Google Display Ads, Google Smart Ads, and YouTube Ads.



 Dreamdata's POV

LinkedIn Ads offers unmatched B2B-specific targeting at scale

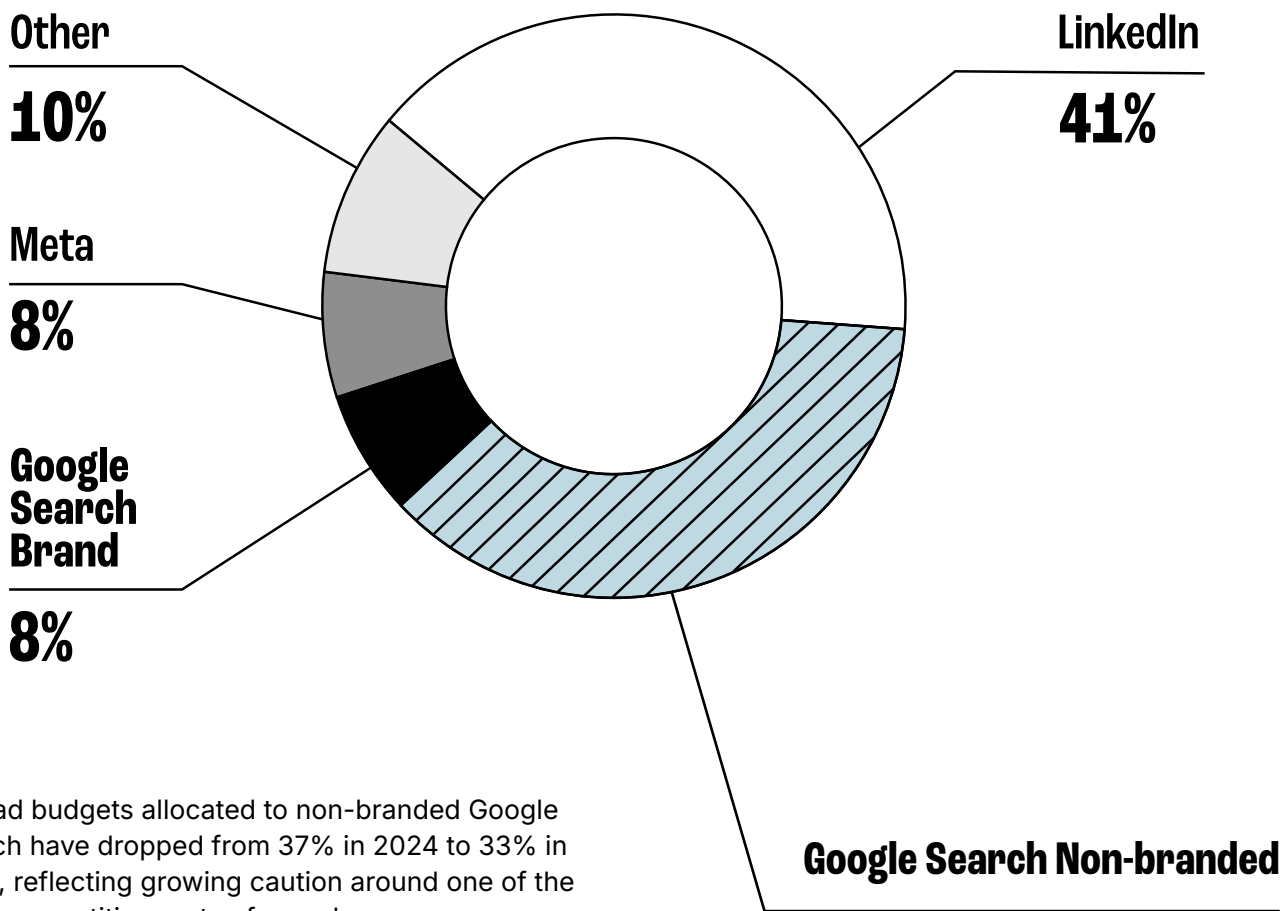
This shift in budget allocation compared with 2024 reflects B2B marketers' continued confidence in LinkedIn Ads.

The confidence in LinkedIn Ads is not only because of the platform's growth in

membership and resulting scalability opportunities, but also because LinkedIn Ads offers unparalleled firmographic targeting, giving B2B marketers much better control over their audience (companies).

3. LinkedIn Ads Benchmarks Report 2025, by Dreamdata.

B2B marketers are pulling back from non-branded Google Search Ads




B2B ad budgets allocated to non-branded Google Search have dropped from 37% in 2024 to 33% in 2025, reflecting growing caution around one of the most competitive parts of search.

Unlike branded search, non-branded search is designed to capture visibility and traffic by targeting terms related to your business. These keywords can be more competitive, and pricing is more volatile.

↘ 33% of total ad spend

Non-branded Google Search ad costs are on the rise

	Aug 24	Jul 25	Development
CPC	\$4.13	↗ \$5.34	↗ 29.36%
CTR	5.47%	↘ 4.04%	↘ 26.16%

 Dreamdata's POV

Why are B2Bs spending less on non-branded terms on Google Search?

For years, B2B growth strategies have leaned heavily on demand capture. Non-branded Google Search was a reliable way to harvest existing intent. Someone searches, you show up, you convert.

But the story is changing.

Non-branded Google Search CPCs are up 29% vs 2024. CTRs are down 26%. LLM-driven "zero-click" experiences mean buyers increasingly get answers without ever visiting your site, as AI-generated answers satisfy buyer questions directly in the results

page - reducing click-through behavior and changing the efficiency of paid search. If 34% of your budget is going towards non-branded Search, you're paying more for less, and that's harder to justify.

At the same time, 81% of

the buyer journey happens before the sales pipeline begins. When research happens inside AI summaries, being remembered *matters*. That's why we're seeing more investment towards brand-building on LinkedIn.

Bust the myth of “sequential” LinkedIn campaigns. Optimize for relevance, not perfect storylines.

One of the most common LinkedIn Ads ideas I hear is that campaigns need to be tightly sequenced:

Ad A introduces the story, Ad B builds on it, and Ad C closes.

And for many years, I tried to build this successfully. Did it work? Almost *never*.

The way people actually experience LinkedIn is messy and non-linear. They scroll between meetings. On mobile. In short bursts. They might see one ad today, skip everything tomorrow, and come back next week. Most users don't actually remember ads they saw on a given day, let alone the messaging or “chapter” they're supposed to be on.

What I've found works better: assume every ad is **the first one** someone sees. That means each creative needs to stand on its own and deliver value immediately:

- Call out a real problem
- Share a useful insight
- Show a concrete use case

Instead of a chopped “story”, **focus on the value** your ad brings:

- Educational (teach me something)
- Diagnostic (help me recognize a problem)
- Proof-driven (show me it works)
- Commercial (show me how to get started)

Run these in parallel to the same audience. Let frequency and variety do the heavy lifting.

Audit your current ads and ask a simple question: ***Would this still make sense if it were the only ad someone ever saw from us?***

If the answer is no, rewrite it.

This approach works because it aligns with how people actually consume LinkedIn: fast, distracted, and non-linear. You're not relying on perfect sequencing or memory. You're winning by showing up with something relevant and useful every single time.

That's how you build impact on LinkedIn in 2026.



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Oyster

B2B Ad Cost and ROAS

How do the major ad platforms compare?

Platform metrics are only part of the equation - metrics like ROAS tell the rest of the story. How do today's B2B marketers track that they're getting real value for every dollar spent?

This section shows how ad costs, click-through rates, and other key performance metrics across channels have developed over the course of a year, comparing 2024 and 2025. You will also find B2B-focused cost metrics like cost per company influenced, and down-funnel metrics like ROAS and influence on pipeline and revenue.

These insights will offer crucial benchmarks to help you assess whether your current campaigns and channels are cost-effective compared to industry averages.



On the surface, LinkedIn Ads appear expensive, but that judgement depends entirely on which metrics you're using

CPC tells you what you paid for a click. CTR tells you how many people clicked. Neither tells you whether you influenced the right companies, reached the full buying group, or contributed to a closed deal. With that in mind, here's what the traditional metrics show, and why they only tell part of the story.

When looking at traditional advertising metrics between the two primary paid social channels, Meta Ads offer the cheapest clicks. Since last year, Meta's CPC has fallen by 11.6%, Google Search CPCs have risen sharply by 31.4%, and LinkedIn's has increased by 11.8%.




Engagement trends have also changed. Meta and LinkedIn's CTR improved (+15.1% and +11.8% respectively), while Google Search saw CTRs decline by 20.7%. This indicates that while price has increased across some channels, engagement has improved for others.

Data note

How we calculate cost per company / contact influenced

Cost per company / contact influence measures the cost of MQLs who had at least one touch with an ad network. This is calculated by taking the totality of MQLs who have had at least one touch with a network and dividing that by the total spend on the network.

■ 2024 ■ 2025

	 Meta	 Google Search	 LinkedIn
CPC	€1.81 ↘ €1.60	€3.95 ↗ €5.19	€5.35 ↗ €5.98
CPM	€9.30 ↘ €9.18	€231.35 ↗ €234.64	€26.62 ↗ €34.33
CTR	0.53% ↗ 0.61%	5.37% ↘ 4.26%	0.51% ↗ 0.57%

LinkedIn Ads remain superior at the company level

If you evaluate performance simply at the contact level (cost per contact influenced), LinkedIn Ads appear to have the highest cost. However, cost per contact has increased across all channels. Since last year, LinkedIn costs have increased by 88.6%, followed by Google Search (+32.2%) and Meta (+3.9%). While this is a sharp rise, this metric can be misleading.

the average deal includes 10 stakeholders (see page 40). So when we shift focus from individuals to companies (as is important in B2B marketing), a different story emerges. Since last year, cost per company influence has dropped dramatically, most notably on LinkedIn, decreasing from €154 in 2024 to €70.11 in 2025. LinkedIn Ads continue to deliver highly efficient company-level reach.

Firstly, we know that influencing a whole buyer group is necessary to win B2B deals, given that


2024 2025

	Meta	Google Search	LinkedIn
Cost per company influenced	€299 ↘ €128.70	€222 ↘ €110.37	€154 ↘ €70.11
Cost per contact influenced	€223 ↗ €231.77	€266 ↗ €362.39	€548 ↗ €1,033.29

Data note

The significant drop in cost per company influenced is partly driven by Dreamdata’s release of a new IP-to-company resolution engine in 2025. The engine identifies up to 15x more companies. The result: better coverage, higher match rates, and greater consistency in identifying which companies are visiting your site. In addition, with LinkedIn’s new Company Intelligence API, Dreamdata now pulls more company-level insights, including organic impressions and engagement (for the first time!), directly from LinkedIn (see page 52).

Cost per company influence for LinkedIn Ads is lower than last year at €70.11

 Dreamdata’s POV

Make sure to track meaningful metrics

It’s important to consider what metrics you are measuring performance against. Ad platforms have trained us to think in B2C terms, especially on the leading cost metrics

level. But in B2B we close companies, so we need to consider measuring account-based metrics, such as the cost per company influenced metric.

Which ad networks provide the best return?

LinkedIn Ads strengthen their lead on ROAS

LinkedIn Ads continue to generate the strongest ROAS among the major ad networks. Since last year, LinkedIn ROAS has increased from 113% to 121%. This change reinforces what we already knew. LinkedIn is still the only platform to deliver a positive return for B2B marketers.

Meta Ads also improved, with ROAS increasing from 29% in 2024 to 51% in 2025. Google Search,

by contrast, saw ROAS decline from 78% to 67%, despite their rising costs.

When compared to the cost data analyzed above, it demonstrates that the higher cost of clicks and impressions doesn't negate LinkedIn Ads' ability to make a return. Meta by comparison offers cheaper clicks, yet offers the lowest return. By comparison, Google Search Ads have the most expensive clicks and you're generating a lower return than LinkedIn.

	■ 2024 □ 2025	 Meta	 Google Search	 LinkedIn
ROAS		29% ↗ 51%	78% ↘ 67%	113% ↗ 121%
Influenced New Business Deals		2% = 2%	25% ↗ 31%	35% ↗ 36%
Share of Budget		8% = 8%	37% ↘ 33%	39% ↗ 41%

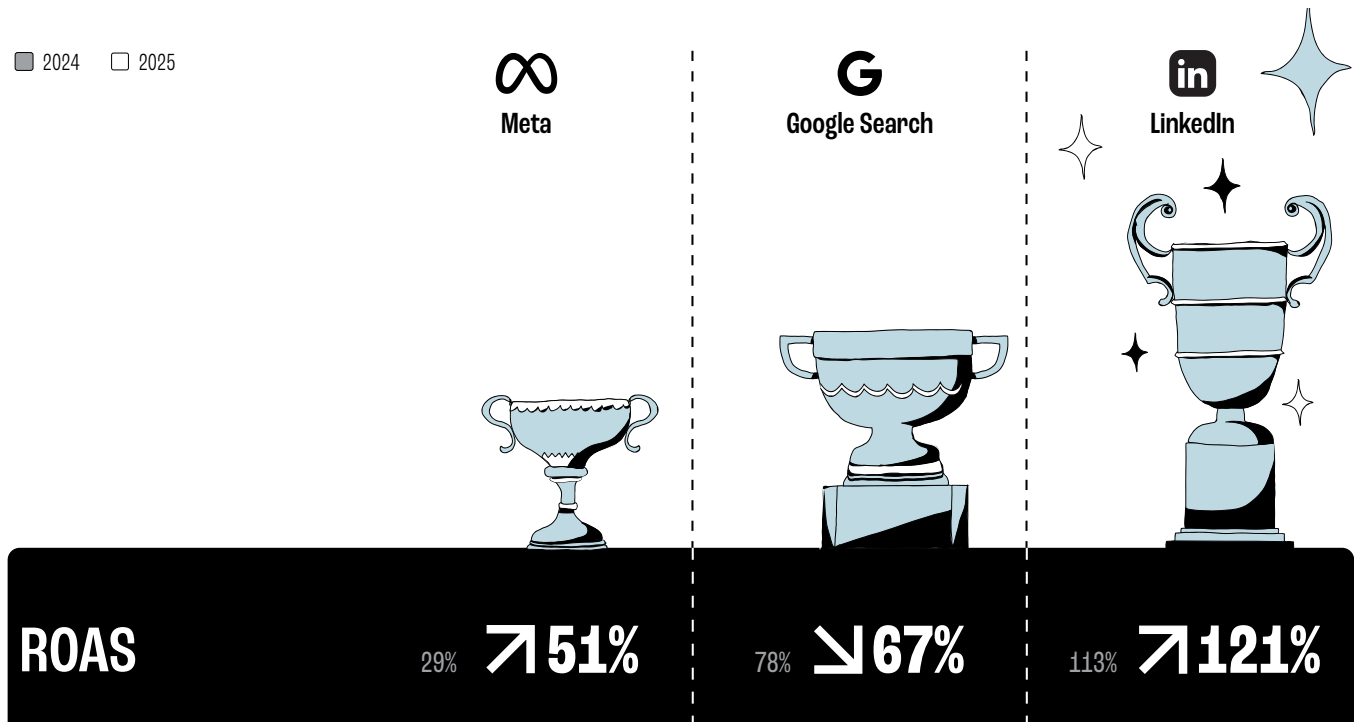
Ad network Return on Ad Spend

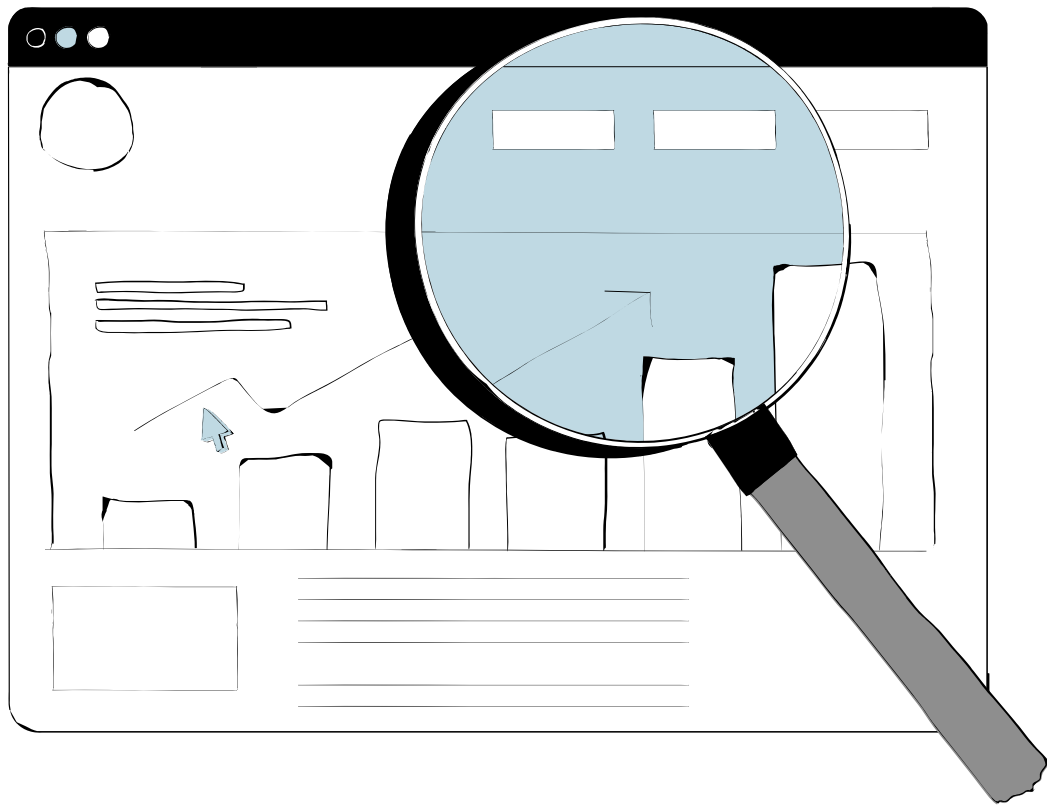
Data note


How did we calculate ROAS?

ROAS is calculated using our data-driven attribution model on closed-won deals over a 12-month period. To improve representativeness, we include customers across the full ROAS distribution while excluding extreme high outliers using percentile-based thresholds. Extremely low anomalous values are filtered separately as part of data quality controls.

■ 2024 □ 2025





 Dreamdata's POV

Tracking B2B marketing impact on pipeline and revenue will help guide where to best invest your budget

At first glance, LinkedIn Ads may seem expensive. But when you focus on what truly matters (pipeline and revenue) it becomes clear that LinkedIn is the best investment for B2B growth.

Leading indicators like top of funnel leads and engagement metrics such as CPC and

CTR don't always translate into a good return. Instead, marketers should shift budgets toward platforms where ROAS is strongest - and LinkedIn is increasingly proving to be one of them.

Shifting budgets towards platforms that have the strongest ROAS reinforces the importance of tracking the right metrics. Without

adequate attribution to give you insights into pipeline and revenue impact, there's a real risk of overvaluing platforms that generate activity but don't contribute to actual business outcomes.

And what about search? Yes, Google captures high-intent search demand, and should not be ignored or completely divested from. However,

to build that demand, and especially in a world of "zero clicks", marketers need to keep their brand top of mind throughout a buying journey which spans the better part of a year. LinkedIn provides nearly limitless opportunities (with new ad formats across video and CTV) to reach and influence decision-makers at scale, ensuring your brand is front and center.

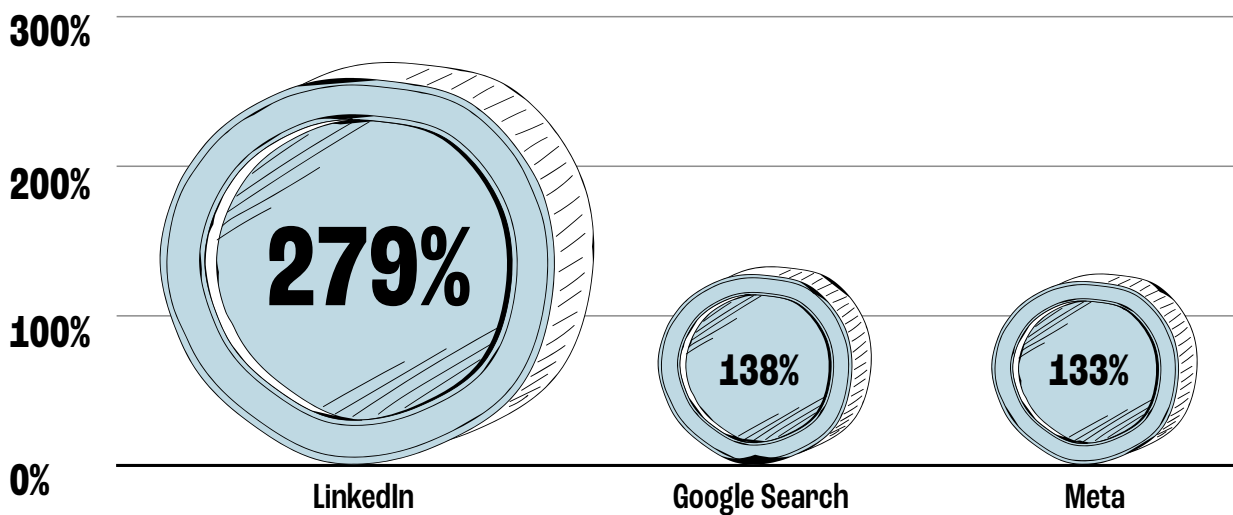
How ROAS changes when we look at top performers


To understand how channels perform among strong advertisers, without results being skewed by extreme outliers, we limited this analysis to customers with a ROAS at or below the 75th percentile. In other words, we excluded the top 25% highest ROAS customers.

When we apply this filter, overall ROAS increases across all platforms, but the uplift is not evenly distributed.

LinkedIn sees the largest relative increase, with ROAS more than doubling to 279%. Google Search and Meta also improve significantly, yet both remain below LinkedIn's performance.

This suggests that while all platforms can perform well under the right conditions, LinkedIn appears to benefit when campaigns are run by customers who already achieve strong returns, even when the most outlier cases are removed.



 Dreamdata's POV

Why is LinkedIn coming out on top?

LinkedIn's high ROAS could signal a broader shift in how B2B marketers are using paid media.

Traditional lead generation tactics, optimized for volume and quick conversions have worked well on Meta and Google Search. But buying cycles are getting longer and

more people are involved (see page 40). A single form fill no longer represents buying intent, it represents one touchpoint in a much larger journey.

This is where attribution becomes so important. We need to see the outcomes of all our GTM activities, including paid and organic impressions and engagements. If not, we

risk scaling channels that generate leads not revenue.

LinkedIn's targeting is built around companies, roles, and buying groups, not just individual leads. With LinkedIn's Company Intelligence API in Dreamdata, marketers can access company-level engagement and impression insights across paid and

organic activity, giving visibility into the companies interacting with their brand.




When LinkedIn's company intelligence is unified all your GTM data through multi-touch attribution, marketers can finally measure what matters: which channels are influencing revenue across the entire buying journey.

LinkedIn is the only channel with positive ROAS

Taken individually, each metric tells a partial story. CPC and CTR reflect attention. Cost per contact reflects reach at the individual level. But none of

these were designed for B2B buying behavior, where deals are won at the company level, across multiple stakeholders, over months.

When you lay all the metrics side by side, a clearer picture emerges: the channels that look expensive on the surface consistently outperform on the metrics that connect to revenue. You can use this table as a prompt to audit which metrics are currently driving your budget decisions - and whether they should be.

	■ 2024 ■ 2025	 Meta	 Google Search	 LinkedIn
CPC		€1.81 ↘ €1.60	€3.95 ↗ €5.19	€5.35 ↗ €5.98
CPM		€9.30 ↘ €9.18	€231.35 ↗ €234.64	€26.62 ↗ €34.33
CTR		0.53% ↗ 0.61%	5.37% ↘ 4.26%	0.51% ↗ 0.57%
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ROAS		29% ↗ 51%	78% ↘ 67%	113% ↗ 121%
Influenced New Business Deals		2% = 2%	25% ↗ 31%	35% ↗ 36%
Share of Budget		8% = 8%	37% ↘ 33%	39% ↗ 41%

Orchestrating LinkedIn for pipeline, not just performance metrics

LinkedIn is by far our strongest paid channel for brand awareness, high-quality demand capture, and pipeline generation. But performance doesn't come from scale alone, it comes from precision and orchestration.

First, treat LinkedIn as a strategic GTM channel, not just a paid acquisition lever. Success starts with being highly selective about your target audience. We segment tightly by geography, industry, company size and buying role, and we tailor messaging to specific stages of the funnel. A senior decision-maker in an enterprise account should see very different messaging from a mid-market practitioner. Relevance drives performance.

Second, align creative with funnel stage. Top-of-funnel content should educate, challenge assumptions, and build credibility, not push demos. Mid-funnel should introduce differentiated points of view and proof. Bottom-funnel messaging should focus on urgency, validation, and conversion. One of the biggest mistakes we see is running sales-led messaging too early.

Third, invest in thought leadership and video. Founder-led content and subject-matter expertise consistently outperform polished corporate ads. LinkedIn is a professional network, people engage with people. We amplify leadership voices and combine that with employee advocacy to extend reach in a way that feels native and trustworthy.

Fourth, measure what matters. CTR and CPC can be misleading. We optimize for influenced pipeline, deal velocity, and revenue contribution - not surface-level engagement metrics.

Finally, consistency compounds. LinkedIn works best when targeting, messaging, creative, and sales follow-up are aligned. It's not a one-off campaign channel - it's a sustained presence channel.

When executed well, LinkedIn becomes more than paid media. It becomes a core engine for category building and long-term revenue growth.



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LEGORA

B2B Customer Journey

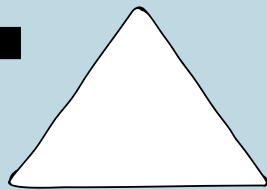
Uncovering the path to revenue

The B2B customer journey is long and complex, spanning multiple channels, stakeholders, and touchpoints. We need to understand the extent of this complexity. This section examines: How long is the B2B customer journey? How many people are involved? What role do LinkedIn ads play and when?

The B2B customer journey is longer

The standard B2B customer journey has grown from 211 days to

272
days

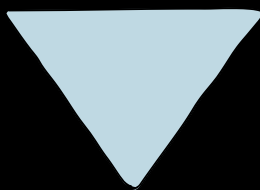


At first, it might look like buyers are taking longer to make decisions. A closer look at where buyers are spending time suggests otherwise.

While the overall journey has lengthened, the sales-led part of the process has become shorter.

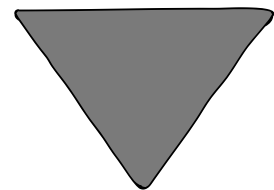
The average time between MQL and SQL has decreased from 107 to

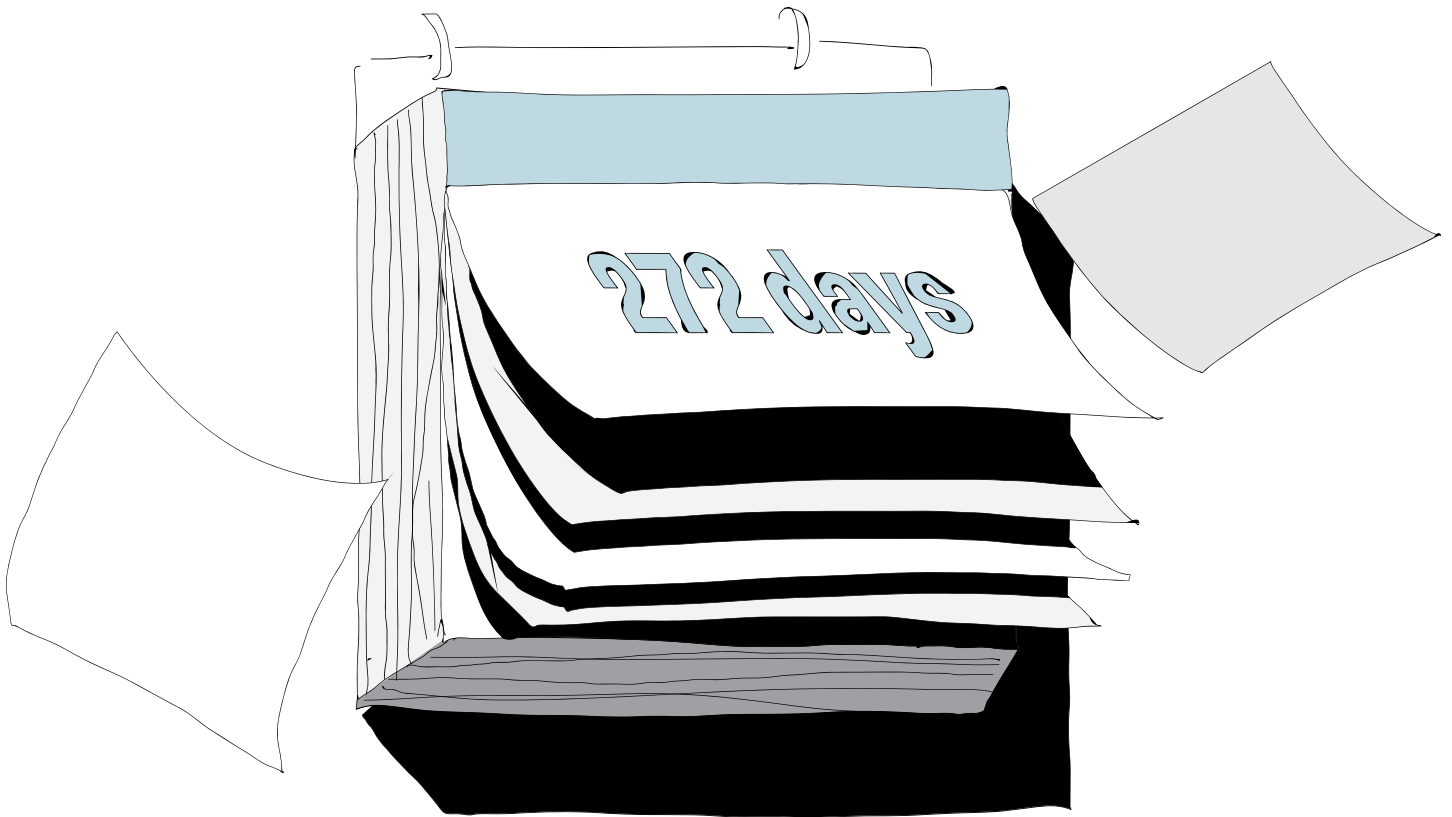
92
days




and the time in the sales pipeline has dropped from 62 to

52
days





 Dreamdata's POV

Marketing builds the decision, sales closes it

Taken together, the B2B customer journey length changes suggest that buyers are entering the sales funnel later, but with higher intent. While the total journey has lengthened significantly; both the time spent in the sales pipeline and the time between MQL and SQL have decreased. This combination is difficult to explain by the time spent in the sales pipeline alone. Much of the research, education, and internal alignment now appears to

happen before a lead becomes an MQL. This data could be telling us that by the time sales is engaged, buyers are more informed and closer to making a decision. As a result, sales conversations require less early-stage discovery and progress more quickly toward revenue. This pattern is consistent with broader changes in B2B buying behavior: longer, self-directed pre-sales phases followed by shorter, more focused sales cycles once intent is clear.

You Don't Win B2B in 30 Days: The Power of Thought Leader Ads

The Data Confirms What We've Always Known

We've always known B2B sales cycles are really long, and now it's great to have real data behind it.

A 272-day timeline can seem daunting, but accepting it will change how you approach your entire B2B marketing strategy. Another way to look at this number: that's how often companies buy business tools or services, often just once a year.

Think Relationships, Not Transactions

The best way to think about this long sales cycle is that your goal is to foster a relationship between you and your prospect. It takes time. You wouldn't ask someone to marry you on the first date, and you shouldn't ask a cold audience to book a demo on the first ad impression either.

Over those 272 days, your job is to build familiarity, earn trust, and stay top of mind so that when that once-a-year buying window opens, you're already the company they want to talk to.

Thought Leader Ads Are the Best Tool for the Job

We always find that LinkedIn Thought Leader Ads work best for this.

They allow your prospects to get to know you, your team, and your leadership over time. It's harder to

build a relationship with a brand, but it's easy to build one with people.

When your founders and subject matter experts consistently appear in your prospect's feed with real insights and a real point of view, that's relationship building at scale.

Storytelling Compounds Over Time

Ultimately, it comes down to storytelling, and LinkedIn is a great business medium for that. Post after post, ad after ad, you're connecting your prospects to your people. You're sharing your perspective on the industry, the problems you solve, and why you think differently. Over months, that story compounds into something impactful: genuine trust.

The Real Signal That It's Working

With Thought Leader Ads, your prospects will get on demo calls and say "I've been reading all of your posts!" That's how you'll know it's working.

Commit to the Long Game

That said, you can't run a 272-day strategy on gut feeling alone. The right tracking and attribution systems will guide you to success. You need to measure influence across the full buyer journey, not just last-click conversions, so you can prove the value of top-of-funnel investment and keep your team committed to the long game. The companies that do this well will win every time.



Anthony Blatner

Speedwork

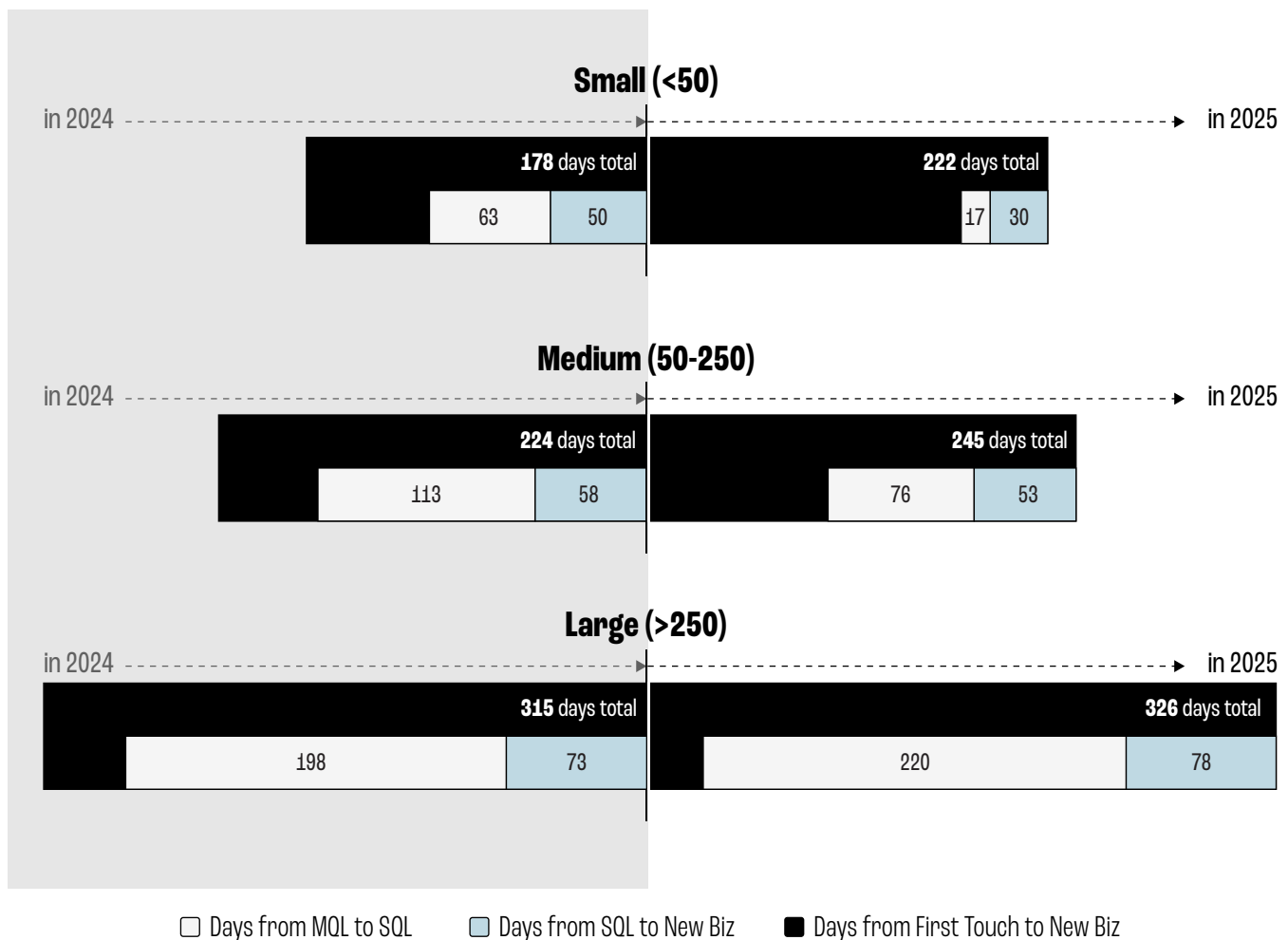
Managing Director | Founder/CMO - Speedwork -- LinkedIn Ads Agency
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/anthonyblatner/>

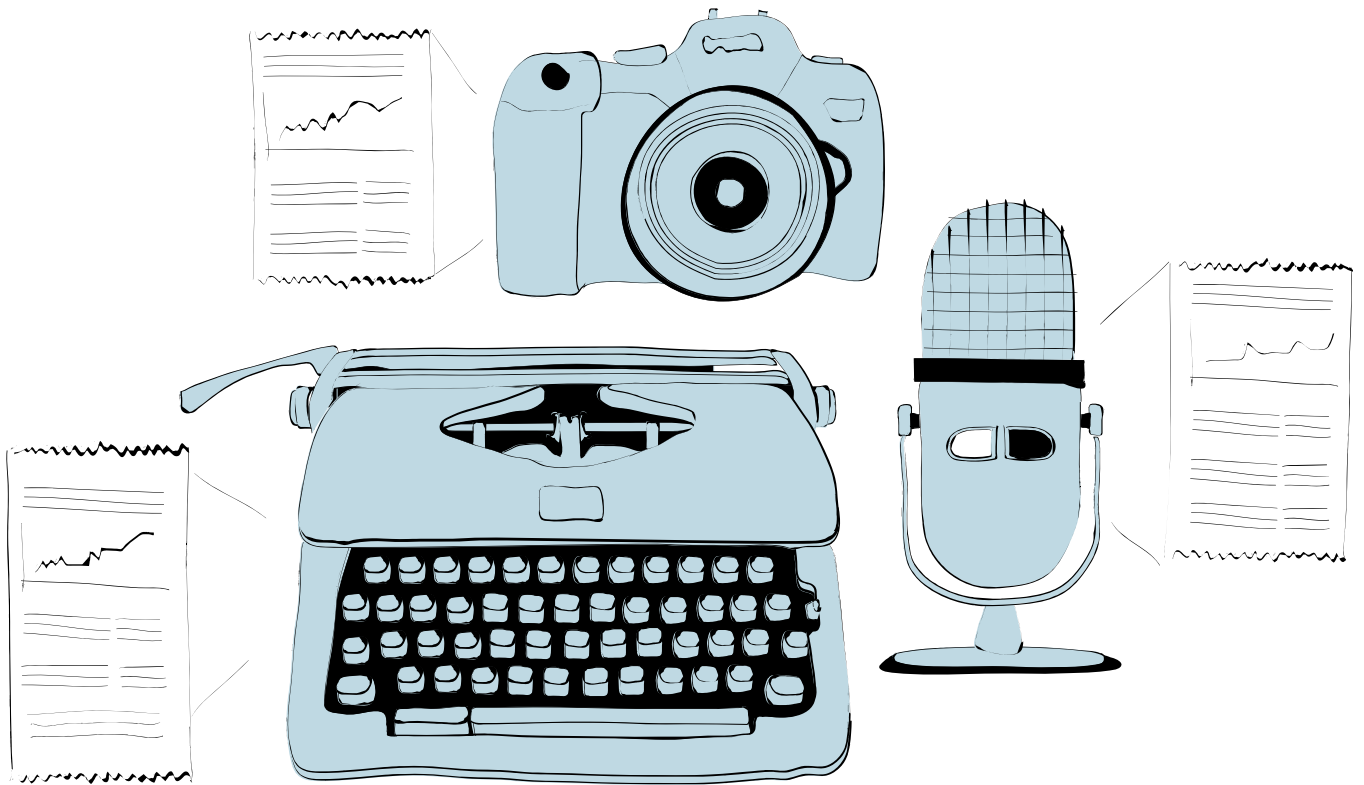
The B2B buying journey has grown across all company sizes, with most time spent in the early awareness stages before becoming an MQL.


Once entering the MQL-to-SQL stage, potential buyers progress more quickly in small and mid-sized companies.

Among smaller companies, the distribution appears to have shifted. The time between MQL and SQL has shortened, while a greater share of time is spent in sales.

Large companies continue to stand out. Their journeys are still characterized by long MQL-to-SQL cycles (**220 days on average**). This is not strange, as compared to SMEs, buying committees are much larger, the internal validation of the tool is harder, and sales involvement requires more consensus - all of which can lengthen the journey.





 Dreamdata's POV

Marketing needs to work to nurture leads into the pipeline

Capturing a lead is just the beginning. In long B2B journeys, demand takes time and is shaped well before a form fill through early exposure, education, and a continuous presence. However, marketers need to continuously re-engage leads through webinars, live events and micro-conversions. Marketers need to spend

dollars on top of funnel brand building so that the company name is top of mind when customers go through their selection process. It's about staying visible and reinforcing value. The takeaway is clear: your job isn't done once you collect the lead - keep prospects engaged and moving towards the sales pipeline.

From awareness to revenue: A three-layer LinkedIn strategy that actually works

My take on LinkedIn Ads in 2026 is to stop treating it like a single acquisition channel and start treating it like a channel that supports multiple moments in the sales cycle, with measurement built in from day one.

The way we run it is by operating in three layers.

First, we use LinkedIn to create qualified awareness. Not “brand for everyone”, but mental availability with the right people in the right companies. Our go to is a meticulous focus on accounts, preferably through account lists aligned with Sales, so we know we are building demand where it can actually turn into quality pipeline. That’s where thought leader ads, zero-click content, short form video, and checklists, the stuff that earns attention without immediately asking for a meeting, does the heavy lifting.

Success here isn’t leads. It’s whether you’re consistently reaching the ICP and building a pool of real engagement you can use later.

Then we move into a nurturing layer, where the goal is to strengthen positioning and build trust. You’re taking people who already engaged with you and giving them better reasons to believe your approach is the right one. This is where we run use cases, guides, playbooks, market stats, analyst angles, and deeper content, and we do it through different category entry points, so the message matches the

context they’re in.

What we’re looking for here is progression.

Are people moving from light engagement into higher intent behaviors like consuming deeper content, visiting key pages, or returning multiple times?

And then you have demand capture, where you either convert directly or you make Sales better. Here we lean on testimonials, customer cases, service specific angles, and conversion optimized landing pages.

The KPI is qualified pipeline and revenue, and the guardrail is whether Sales accepts what’s coming in and can actually move it forward, which is why marketing and sales have to stay tightly aligned on what “qualified” means.

However, regardless of the three layers, measurement is non-negotiable in 2026. You need LinkedIn wired into your CRM with good data governance.

And if you can, **add Dreamdata**, minimum the free version via API, ideally paid, so you can connect engagement to pipeline and revenue and avoid giving retargeting all the credit. **Because the real win isn’t activity. It’s proving commercial impact across the full journey.**



Kevin Hjorslev

Profound North

LinkedIn Certified Marketing Expert - Profound North

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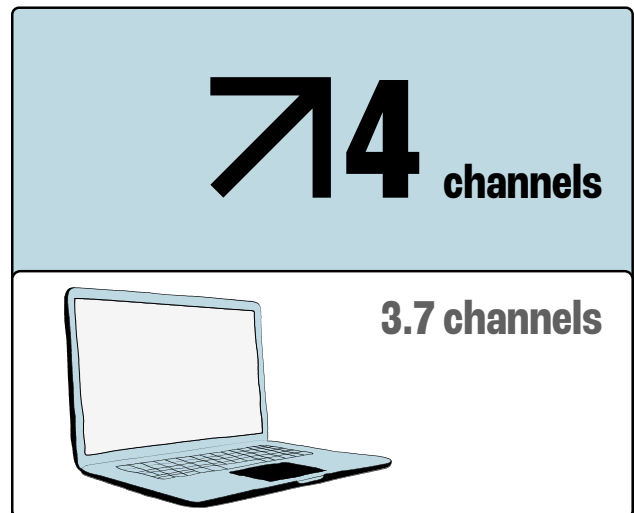
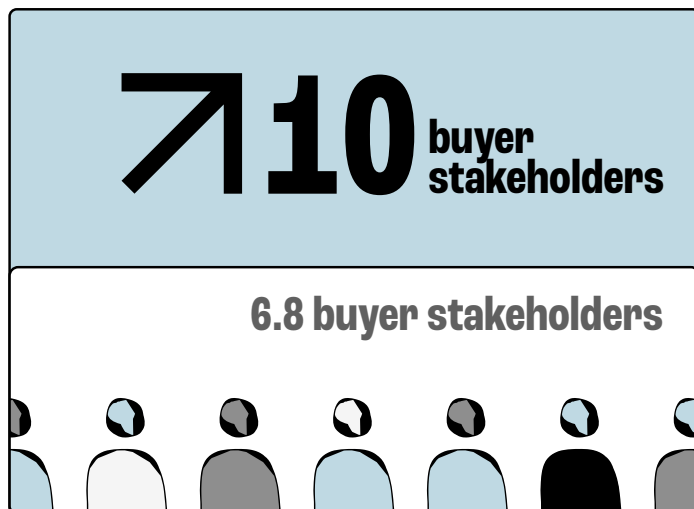
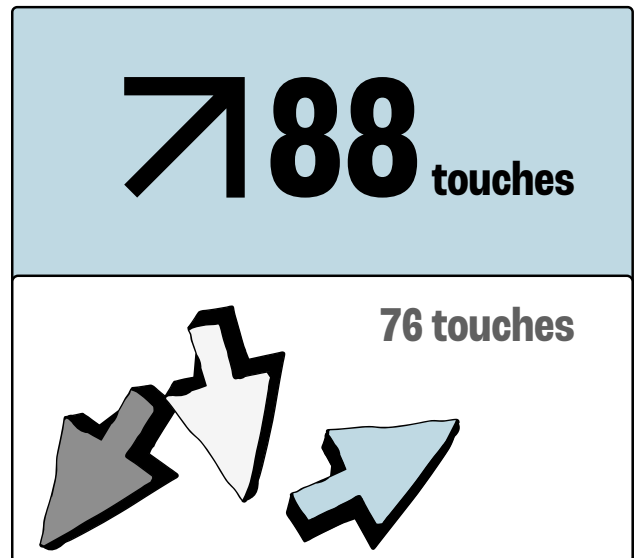
The complexity of B2B buying:

More touchpoints, stakeholders, and channels

Between 2024 and 2025, the B2B buying journey has become noticeably more complex. More touches (88), more channels (4), and more stakeholders (10). What was already a long and fragmented process is now even more distributed.

In practical terms, this means fewer linear journeys and fewer single conversion moments. Instead, buying decisions are shaped by dozens of interactions across multiple platforms, with influence spread across an entire buying group, rather than a single decision maker.

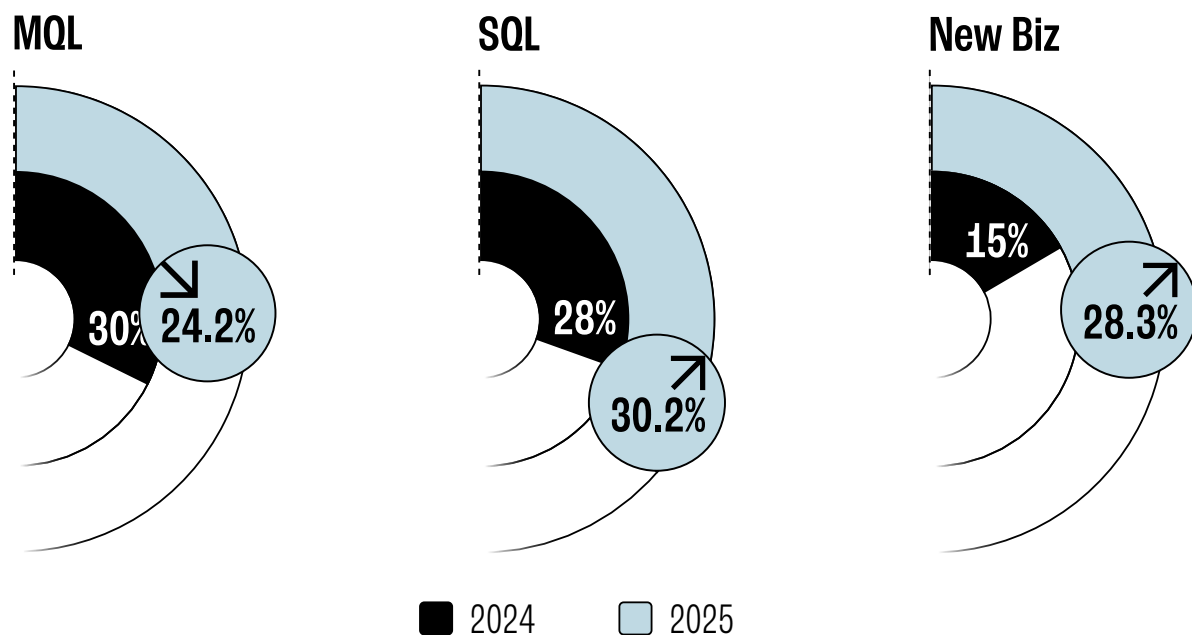
2024 2025




LinkedIn Ads influence has increased after the MQL stage

LinkedIn Ads play a growing role across the B2B customer journey, with influence increasing at later funnel stages.

LinkedIn Ads account for 24.2% of all sessions at the MQL stage, rising to 30.2% at SQL, and 28.3% at the New Business stage. Unlike last year's findings, LinkedIn's influence doesn't decline as prospects move down funnel, but strengthens when sales is engaged.



 Dreamdata's POV

LinkedIn Ads a full-funnel ad platform

In our previous report, LinkedIn Ads showed their strongest impact at the MQL stage, showing their value in demand generation. This year, the data tells a more mature story.

This change in sessions could reflect how B2B marketers are using LinkedIn Ads. Not just for demand generation, but as a full-funnel platform

as marketers look to build brand and drive demand. LinkedIn is increasingly used to engage buying groups during the sales cycle, because the

ad targeting can reinforce awareness and maintain brand presence throughout the customer's evaluation and decision making process.

How I Run LinkedIn Ads as a Non Expert

I am not a LinkedIn ads expert.

What I do have is a repeatable way to use LinkedIn ads to make the right people feel like you are everywhere, without turning your brand into a coupon code.

The whole approach starts with a belief I have learned the hard way:

If a post cannot earn attention organically, paying to distribute it just helps **more people ignore it.**



Brendan Hufford

Head of Marketing - Growth Sprints

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/brendanhufford/>

 **Growth Sprints**

Step 1: Build the Organic Strategy First

The best LinkedIn ads tend to look like the organic posts that already worked.

LinkedIn is its own planet. Viral here means recognition. It means someone reading a line and thinking, "Oh wow, you put words to the thing I have been dealing with."

The win condition is frequency.

You want the right people to open the app and feel like you are always right there, near the top, again.

Step 3: Aim for Consumption First

Only a small slice of your market is actively shopping at any given time. Most people are trying to make sense of their world, keep their job, and not drown in tools and meetings.

So I optimize for consumption first.

1. The content has to stop the scroll
2. Then, earn the "Read more" click, or the swipe, or the full video watch.

That means it needs an open loop and it needs relevance. Curiosity plus "this is my life" is the combo I'm chasing.

Step 2: Optimize for Persistent Problems, Not Trends

I build content around the stuff that doesn't expire:

- persistent pains
- shared frustrations
- real problems people keep running into
- the language they already use when they complain to their team

This is where repeatable themes matter. I want a few signature lanes I can run forever. I want signature phrasing. I want problem naming (Content IP) that sticks.

When you name the problem well, you do not need a clever hook. The hook is the recognition.

Step 4: Trigger an Identity Reaction

My best-performing LinkedIn posts trigger an identity reaction. Someone does one of these:

- comments because a phrase hit them
 - saves it because it is useful
 - shares it because it resonates
 - drops it in Slack because it made them feel seen
- That is the goal. Not always a click. Not a lead. An identity reaction.

Because identity reactions create distribution on LinkedIn. Distribution creates familiarity. Familiarity creates trust. Trust turns into pipeline when timing lines up.

Step 5: Promote the Winners as Thought Leadership Ads

Once I have posts that are already working, I put paid behind them.

This is my top layer: thought leadership ads to a tight, relevant audience using basic LinkedIn targeting (role, seniority, industry, company size).

These people get served content that focuses on the problem. I am not trying to force a conversion at this stage. I am trying to deepen recognition and reinforce the framing.

Step 6: Retarget With Process and Proof

Then I add the retargeting layer.

Anyone who engaged with the thought leadership posts gets moved into the next set of content, where I introduce:

- my process for solving the problem
- proof that I have solved it before

Retargeting audiences usually include:

- website visitors
- company page visitors
- people who engaged with the top-layer leadership ads

This second layer is where you earn the right to be more specific. They already raised their hand by engaging. Now you can go from naming the problem to showing the path out.

Test Organically. Scale with Ads.

I use LinkedIn ads to make sure the right people keep hearing the same truth, long enough that it becomes obvious.

Top layer names the problem so they feel seen.
Next layer shows the path out so they trust you.
Proof comes last, when they are ready to believe it.

Trying to convert cold strangers on LinkedIn works, but you are going to hate your numbers. If you are trying to be remembered by the right people, you are finally playing the game LinkedIn rewards.

Time from LinkedIn Ads Signal to Revenue

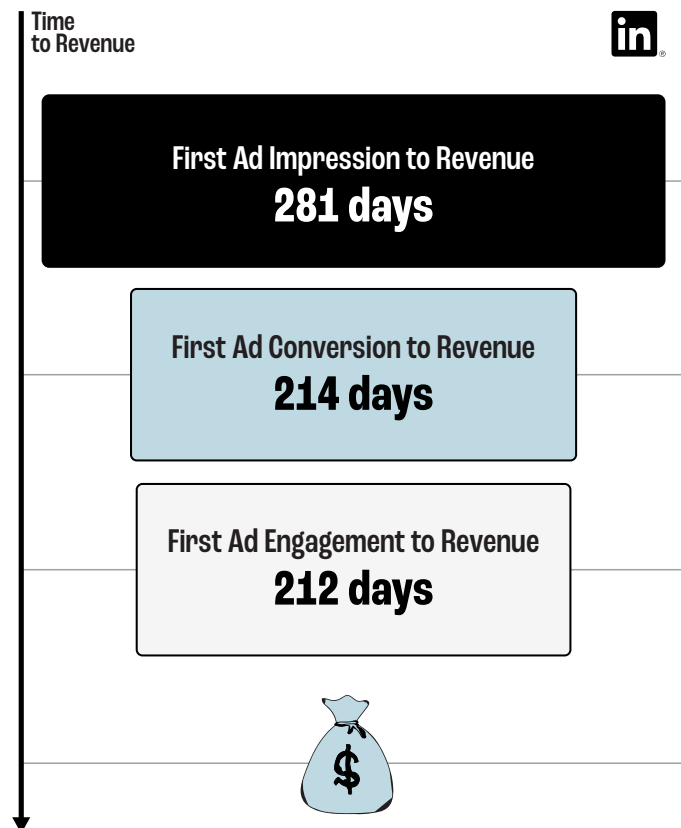
Average time from first LinkedIn Ads Impression to revenue is 281 days, demonstrating that impressions are the very first level of contact between a brand and prospective customers.

More notably, the time from first LinkedIn Ads conversion to revenue (214 days) is almost identical to the time from first LinkedIn Ads engagement to revenue (think video views, likes, comments, clicks) which averages 212 days.

Data note

How we calculate time from signal to revenue

The data has calculated the average time from the very first signal type (impression, ad engagement, conversion) to revenue. Typically there are multiple of these signals across the customer journey (see real customer journey on pages 56-57).




Ad engagement signals revenue just as strongly as conversions

This length of cycles is interesting. It suggests that in long B2B buying journeys, ad engagement signals can be just as meaningful as conversions in terms of their relationship to eventual revenue. In other words, buyers that engage with ads but don't immediately

convert may be just as early in decision-making processes as those who submit a form. Not all valuable intent signals in B2B are tied to a conversion. Engagement appears to play a comparable role, particularly when buying decisions unfold over many months.

7.7x more revenue attributed to LinkedIn Ads

When LinkedIn Ads paid engagement data is included in revenue attribution modeling, there is a 7.7x increase in the accuracy of measured ROI. Not tracking this paid engagement data means missed revenue.

 Dreamdata's POV

Why can conversion take longer than engagement?

It may seem counterintuitive that the time from first ad conversion to revenue is slightly longer than from first ad engagement to revenue. In B2B buying journeys, especially those on LinkedIn, conversions aren't always late stage signals.

Conversions attributed to LinkedIn can represent early-stage actions like content downloads, webinar registrations or event sign-ups. These actions can happen well before a company is in an active buying cycle. They can be driven by individuals who are researching rather than

making purchasing decisions. Together, ad engagement and conversions on average come months later, where we can assume greater brand recognizability through exposure to ads can encourage engagement. Impressions operate farthest up the funnel, building brand awareness. Although, as you can see, in the customer journey on pages 56 and 57, they also play a role further down funnel, typically through retargeting campaigns.

The interactions can be used as important intent signals which can then be used to trigger specific campaigns

or outreach. As well as help us better predict revenue.

Are LinkedIn Ads a slower channel or just early?

LinkedIn Ads interactions tend to have slightly longer journeys from first touch to new business, averaging 281 days compared to the overall average of 272 days.

Most B2B buyers aren't actively looking to purchase at any given moment. According to

the 95:5 rule (from LinkedIn and the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute), 95% of B2B buyers are out of market today, but they will be in the future. If they never see your ads, they won't remember you when it's time to buy.

Consistent impressions ensure your brand stays top of mind so that when buyers are ready, you're on their shortlist. If your ads aren't reaching enough of your total addressable market (TAM), you're not just experiencing a slow channel - you're potentially limiting future growth.

If LinkedIn isn't driving pipeline, check your foundations - not your design

When prospects come to us struggling to make LinkedIn Ads work, it's because their priorities are backwards. They obsess over creative when weak foundations are the blocker.

This is the priority order for building a predictable LinkedIn Ads demand engine:

Tracking > Targeting > Bidding > Creative

Your creative could be epic, but it won't work with weak foundations.

First, use server-side and offline conversion tracking (OCT). This mitigates the data black hole from privacy tools so you can see what's generating pipeline and what isn't. **We use Dreamdata to make OCT easy.** You'll have reliable data to make calculated in-platform decisions about what to scale and cut.

Next, use a 3rd party audience tool or company list for better accuracy. Your audience size needs to match your budget too. LinkedIn Ads won't work if you're hitting 5% reach with 2 frequency. The minimum benchmark is 50%+ reach and 10+ frequency every 90 days. Or as close to that as possible. Ideally more. This maximizes the number of in-market buyers who see your content and convert to pipeline, while also building recall with out-market prospects to generate future demand.

With bidding, avoid conversion and website visitor objectives. They're more expensive and limit reach which hurts pipeline acquisition. Test the awareness, engagement, and video views objectives as they deliver higher reach and frequency on premium placements for less. Max delivery or manual bidding with "enable bid adjustment for high-value clicks" set to on will drive up CPMs so you pay more for less pipeline. Instead, use manual bidding with high-value clicks adjustment off for engagement campaigns and set a 3 frequency cap every 7 days for awareness campaigns that don't have manual bidding options.

With the foundations dialed in, it's finally time to get creative.

Pain-point focused content works best for pipeline acquisition. POV content works best for recall. Ideally, every creative should include both. Video and thought-leader ads are massively outperforming single images right now, so prioritize those formats when planning content.

With this setup, you should see consistent attributable pipeline, even from your cold awareness campaigns.



Patrick Cummings

Director of Marketing - KlientBoost

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/patrick-james-cumming/>



Your LinkedIn Company Page is a revenue signal

This is a big deal •

For the first time ever, in a collaboration with LinkedIn, we can see exactly how organic LinkedIn Company Page activity influences revenue across the entire B2B funnel.

While organic impressions on Company Pages aren't present in every journey, their influence becomes more apparent as deals move further down the funnel.

9.4%
of MQLs

include at least one organic
Company Page impression,

increasing to

15%
at SQL

and

17.9%
**for closed New
Business deals.**

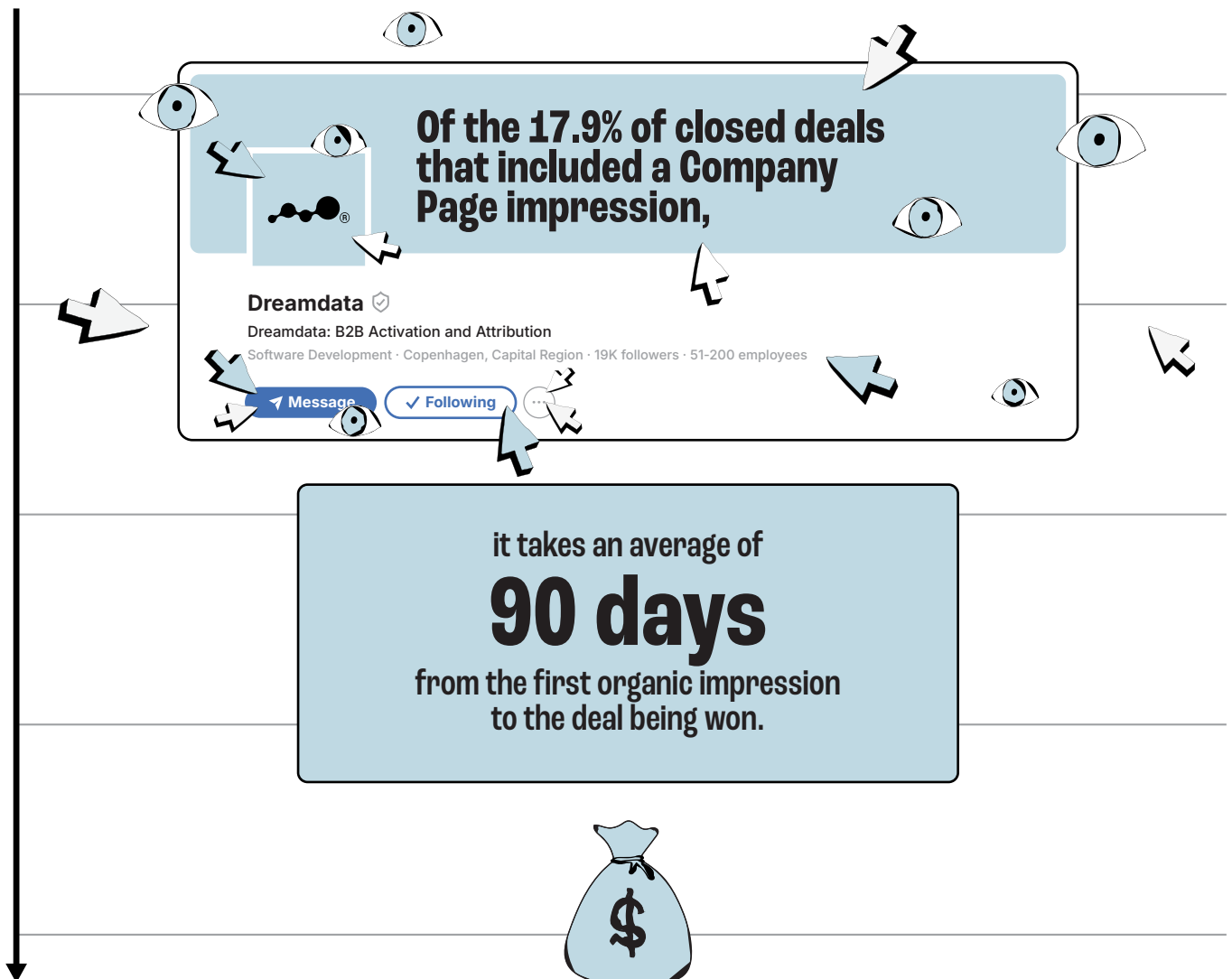
Nearly 1 in 5 closed deals have a LinkedIn Company Page view.

If you can see that a company has viewed your LinkedIn Company Page, treat it as a signal.

That means:

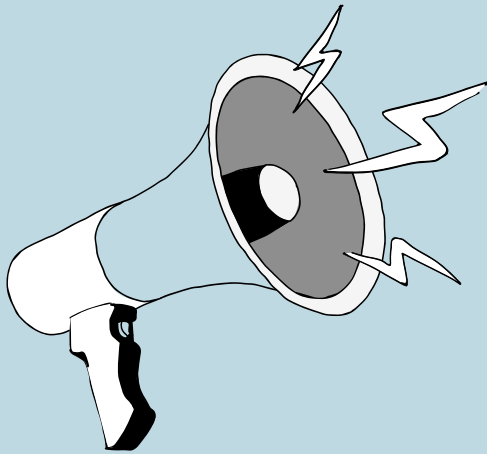
- Triggering targeted LinkedIn ads to that account
- Adding them to retargeting or high-intent audience segments
- Notifying Sales of the account

With LinkedIn's Company Intelligence API in Dreamdata, these impressions can now be analyzed at the company level alongside all your GTM activities.



LinkedIn's Company Intelligence

With LinkedIn's new Company Intelligence, Dreamdata now pulls more company-level insights, including organic impressions and engagement (for the first time!), directly from LinkedIn.

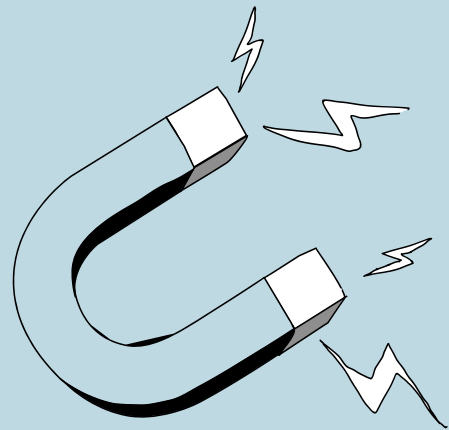


Up to a

10x*

**increase in
companies reached**

(accounts that saw your content via paid or organic impressions).



Up to a

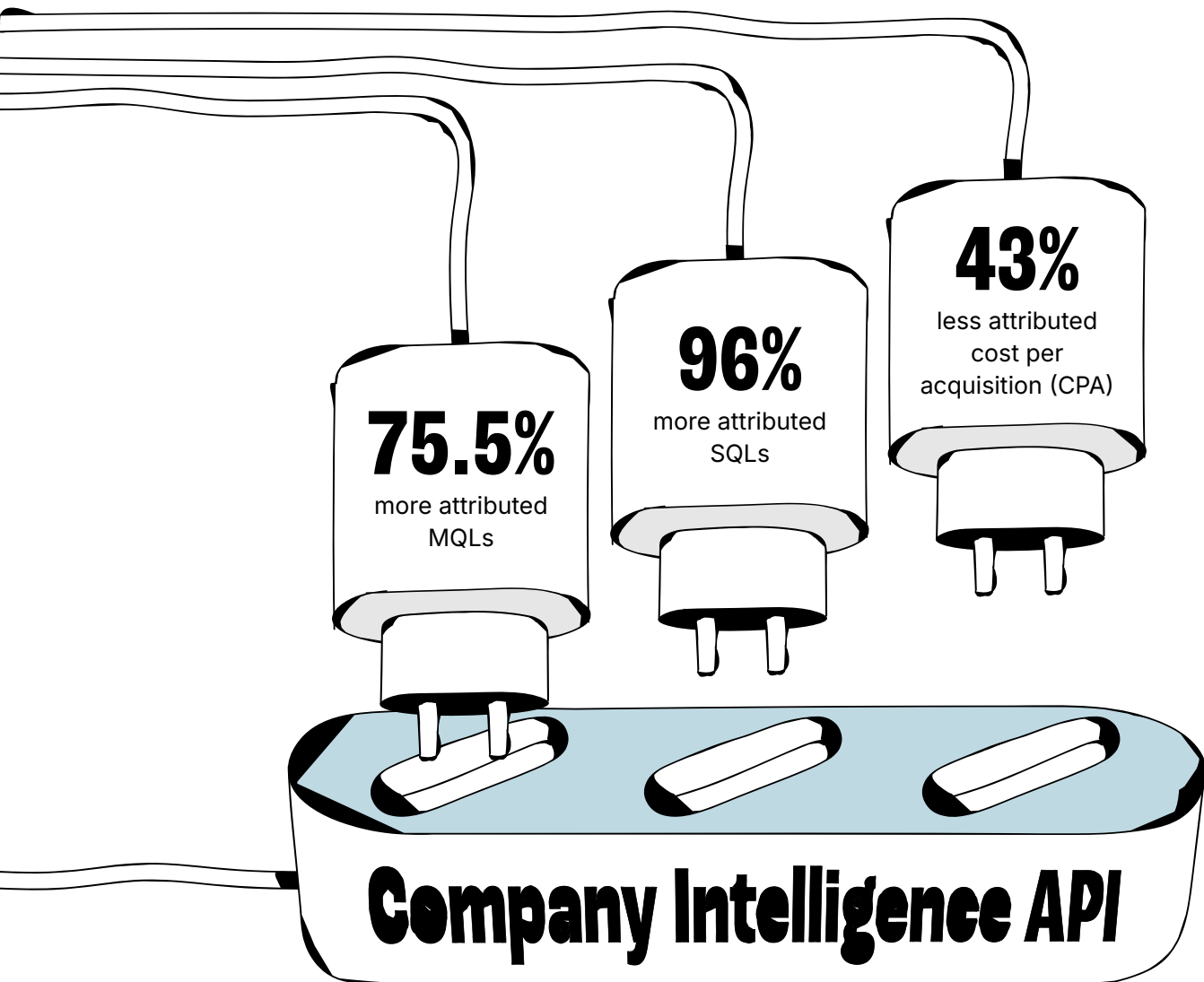
4x*

**increase in
companies engaged**

(accounts that actively interacted with your content - clicked, reacted, commented).

With more complete data, your LinkedIn attribution and ROI become more accurate, and you can push more relevant accounts to sales.

The results from tests by LinkedIn* also speak for themselves:



Thought Leader Ads: Going from reactive to strategic

Although many B2B brands will spend significant budget on Thought Leader Ads on LinkedIn, the format has struggled to be adopted as a strategic asset in companies' ad-compositions.

The primary reason is that most marketing teams think about Thought Leader Ads contrariwise.

They take infrequent stock of the posts available from their internal thought leaders (usually the C-suite) and boost whatever seems most relevant to the business.

This leads to many Thought Leader Ads that were never designed to be promoted.

The result: Posts with a mismatch in creative and content, poor hooks, overpersonalization or lack of promotional efforts.

I have helped companies like Cognism and Personio get more strategic with their Thought Leader Ads.

Here is how to be successful:

1. Use webinars, content launches, product releases and success milestones as triggers for writing content.
2. Maximize the amount of thought leaders that post about the trigger.
 - Get (and pay) as many external thought leaders to do the same.
3. Give exact instructions on creative direction (selfies in front of a monitor with the event

displayed work best).

4. Create custom UTMs to include in your post to track success.
5. Pick the best performer and boost with high budgets for as long as the trigger is still relevant to the audience.
 - When in doubt, aim for 40% audience penetration with a frequency of 3 per month.
6. Be vocal about performance and what (and who) performed best (this will make next time easier).

Using this simple workflow, we have seen tremendous results like lowering the cost per webinar registrations from €80 with traditional single image to €10 with Thought Leader Ads.

Before trying, I want you to consider three more things:

1. If your internal thought leaders struggle at copy, just do the writing for them. They just need to post.
2. Thought Leader Ads tend to perform lopsided. Aim for at least 10% CTR and watch Cost/Conversion closely.
3. Don't wait too long with pausing underperforming Ads. If they start low, they stay low.

In case you are struggling to get your setup running, reach out any time at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/matthisjanssen/>



Matthis Janssen

VP Revenue Marketing - YOYABA

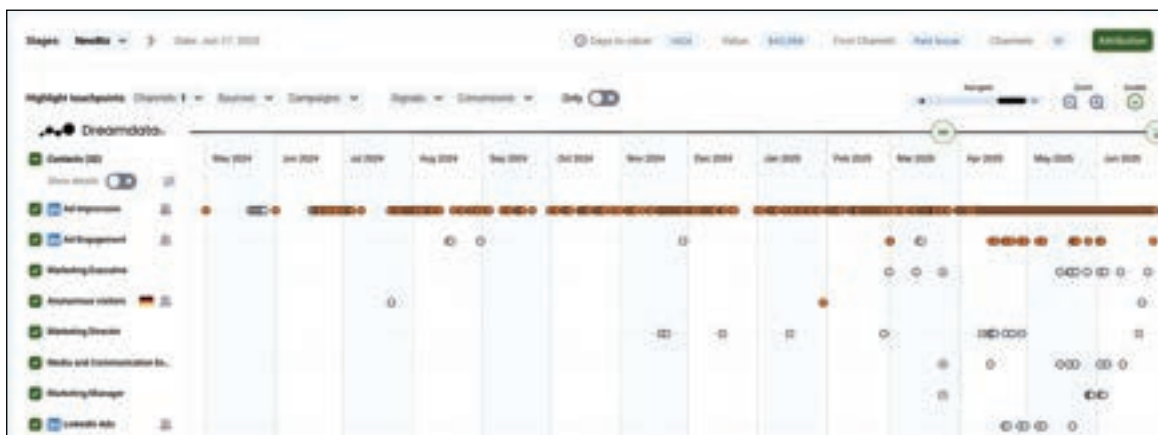
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/matthisjanssen/>




Mapping the long and complex B2B customer journey

Here are two visualizations of real B2B customer journeys. The journeys translate all the insights in this section, clearly reflecting the complexity and length of customer journeys.

You can see just how many stakeholders are involved, and how these weave in and out of the customer journey as they move towards purchase. The journeys also reveal the sheer number of touches and sessions that take place.

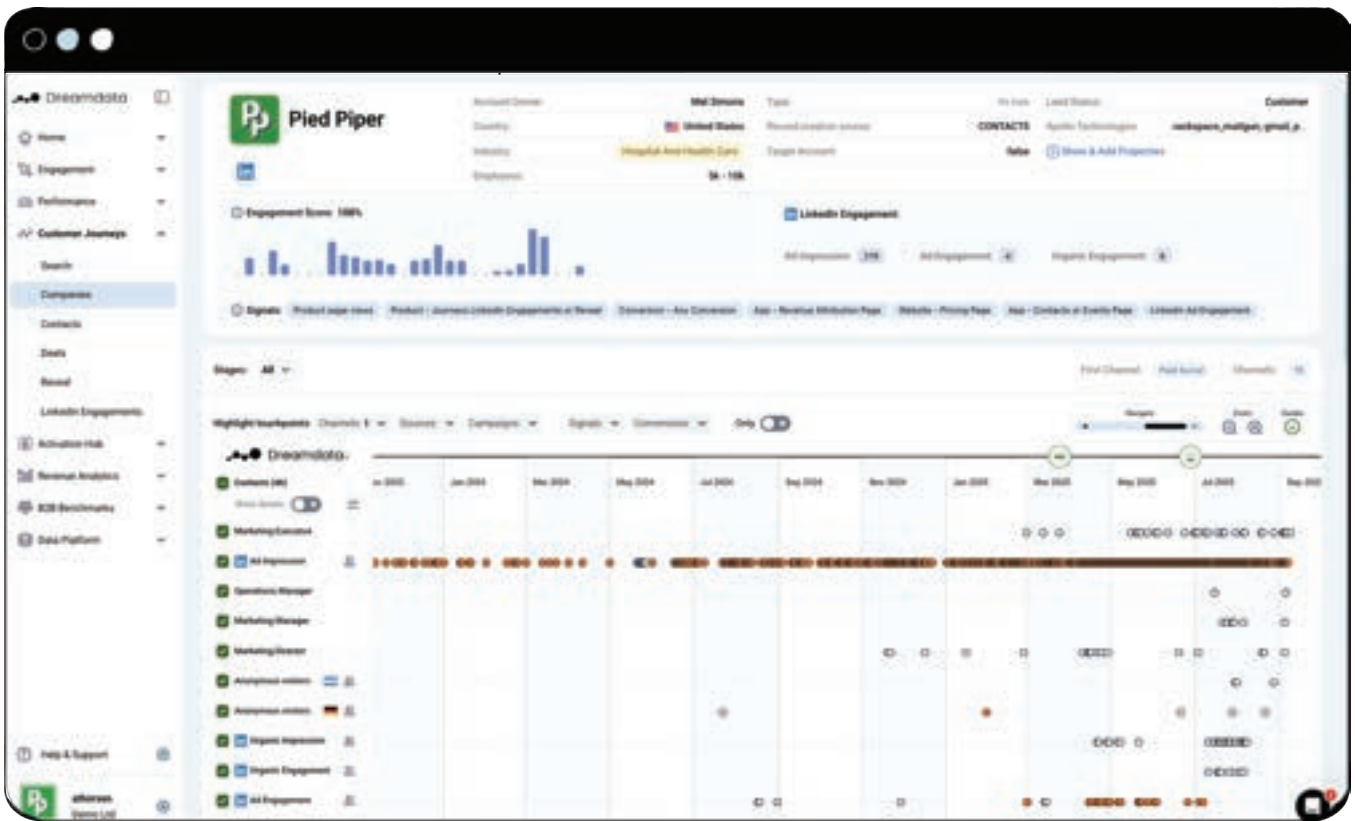


 Dreamdata's POV

Tracking the end-to-end B2B customer journey is essential to optimize performance

This customer journey visual clearly illustrates the importance of end-to-end journey tracking, and understanding the role each touch and channel plays in closing deals. CRM Original Source fields, which many B2B marketers still rely on today, notoriously overrepresent Direct traffic as it captures

only the website sessions in which conversions happen. But B2B demand does not emerge from nothing. Instead, it comes from deliberate marketing activities, and knowing which these are exactly is a cheat code to winning the B2B marketing game. So it's essential that you track the end-to-end B2B customer journey.

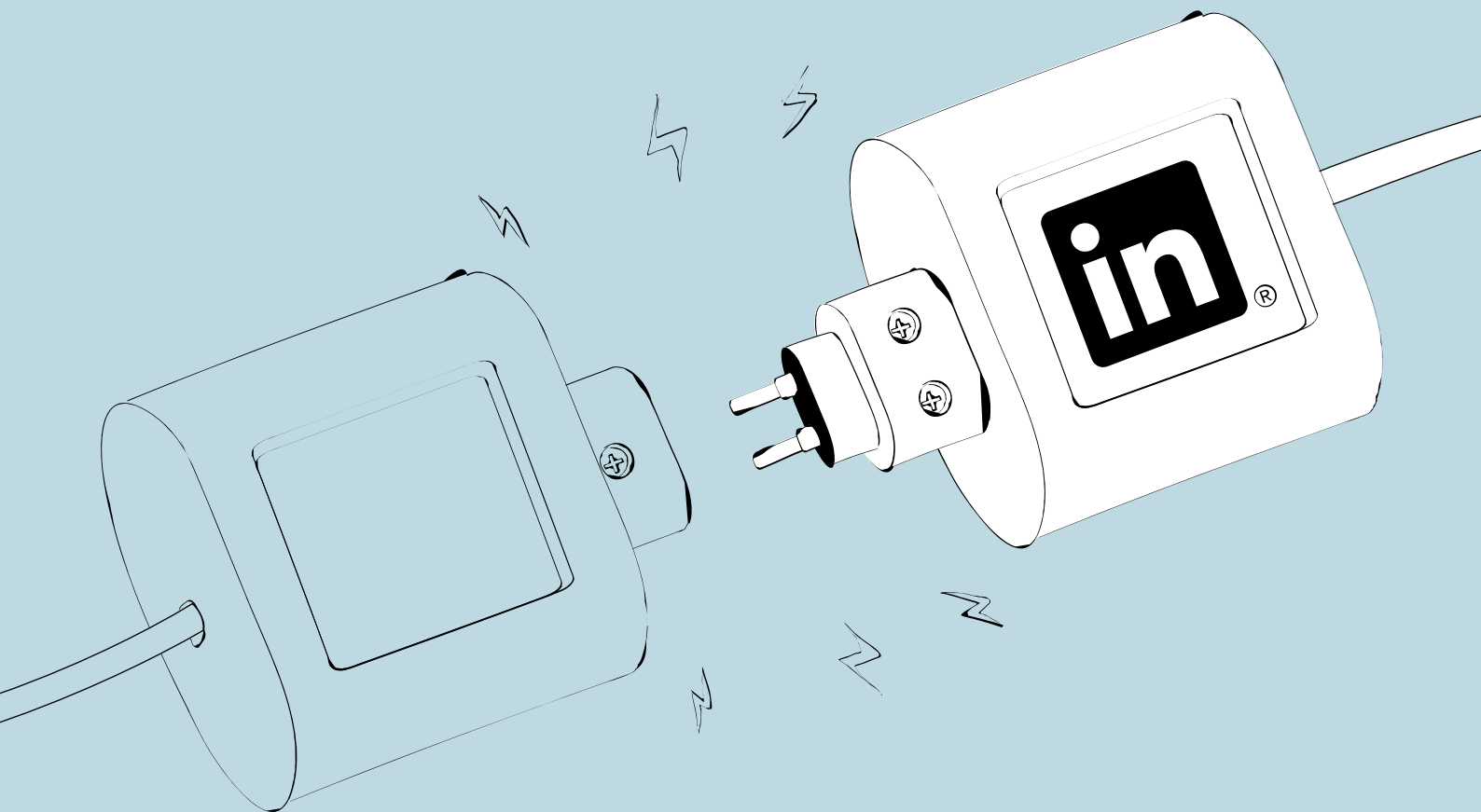


Highlighted in orange are all the LinkedIn Ads and organic engagement and impressions that took place. The visual not only illustrates the significance of LinkedIn Ads in buying journeys, but also shows how these take place throughout the journey - although predominantly early in the process.

It's also useful to observe the interplay between Marketing and Sales as customers make their way through the pipeline.

Marketing and Sales are not operating in the arbitrary silos we imagine. Rather they are mutually supporting activities, with marketing campaigns (typically retargeting) playing a role in nurturing as much as Sales outreach can play a role in acquisition.

LinkedIn's Conversions API (CAPI)



Automating ads optimization

In the B2B buying journey, touchpoints take place across platforms, meaning conversions happen both 'online' (within an ad platform's tracking scope) and 'offline' (on another platform, typically the CRM).

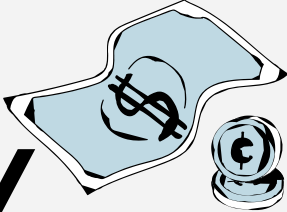
B2B Marketers need to be sending this valuable offline data back into their advertising platforms to automate optimization.

LinkedIn's CAPI enables you to feed LinkedIn Ads with 'offline' conversion data - pipeline and revenue data stored traditionally in the CRM. This enables marketers to get even more out of your ads with better matching, ad relevance optimization, and aggregate reporting on ad conversions - without compromising privacy compliance.

But how widely has CAPI been adopted? What measurable improvements are marketers seeing? This section highlights adoption benchmarks, performance gains, and best practices to ensure your LinkedIn Ads strategy is performing as efficiently as possible.

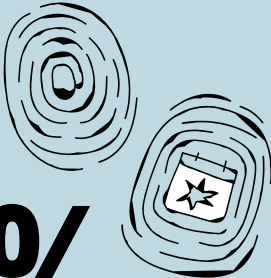
How B2B marketers are unlocking better performance with LinkedIn CAPI

**This is data from a LinkedIn internal study*

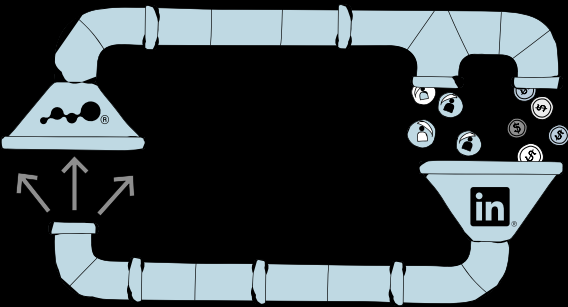


20%
Lower CPA*

LinkedIn has found that on average those using LinkedIn CAPI see a 20% reduction in their cost-per-action, and an 31% increase in attributed conversions to LinkedIn Ads. Proving campaigns optimized towards down funnel conversions perform better.



31%
more attributed conversions*

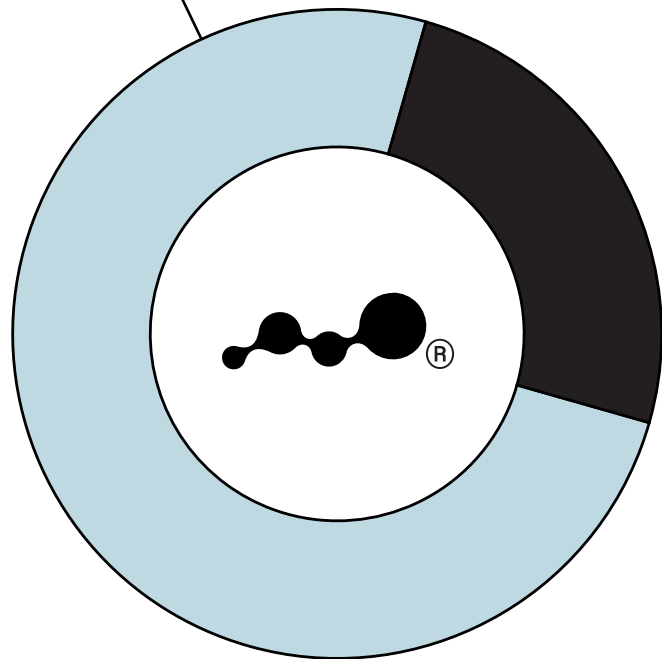



64%
of CAPI users optimize towards pipeline conversions and revenue

This means that B2B marketers are prioritizing outcomes tied directly to qualified pipeline and revenue. By feeding CAPI with this data, marketers can improve campaign performance by ensuring ad campaigns are optimized towards leads that look like those which convert into the pipeline and beyond.

75%

of all Dreamdata customers using LinkedIn Ads have integrated CAPI.



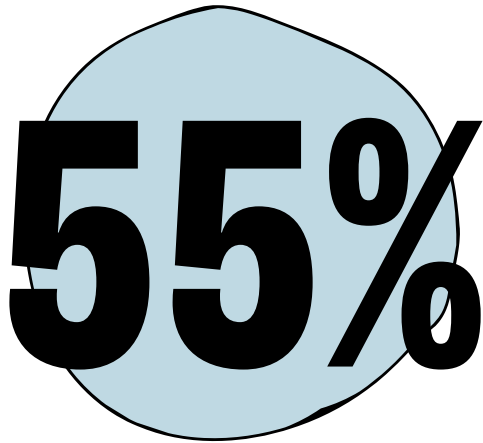
 Dreamdata's POV

Send pipeline and revenue data to LinkedIn Ads instantly

LinkedIn CAPI exists to allow ad buyers to send pipeline and revenue data back to LinkedIn Ads.

This helps LinkedIn Ads gain clarity of what types of users and accounts become pipeline and revenue months after the initial ad click or engagement - so it can go on to automatically optimize your next campaigns.

It makes sense then that the closer to revenue this data is, the better LinkedIn Ads will be able to optimize campaigns, as this data is the truest representation of the types of companies that buy your product. And the benefits, a 20% reduction in CPA and 31% increase in attributed revenue, speak for themselves. So don't leave your pipeline and revenue data sitting around, activate it through CAPI.

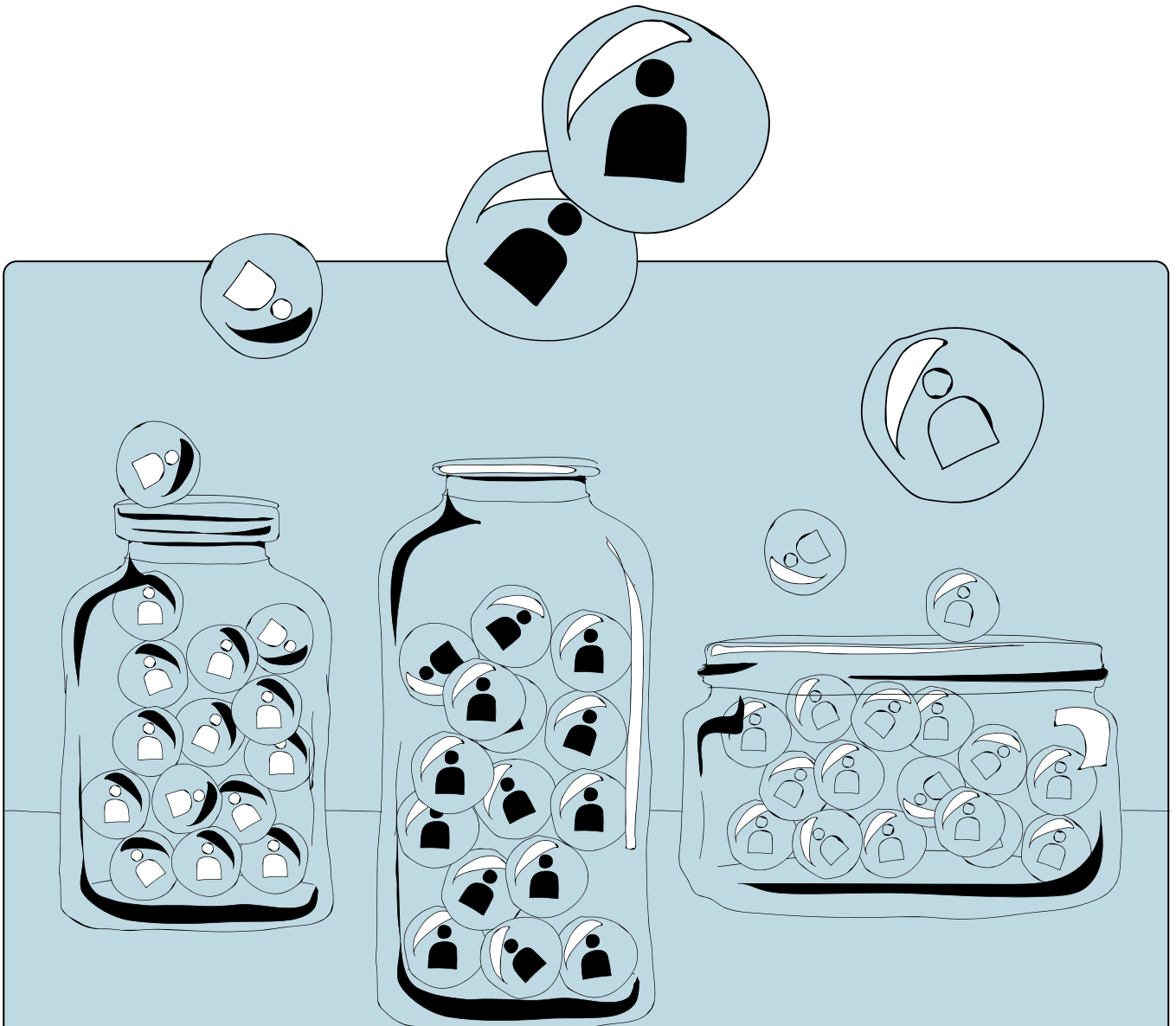


55%

of our customers use Dreamdata's LinkedIn Matched Audiences to run ads

LinkedIn Matched Audiences allows marketers to use their own data to target specific prospects on LinkedIn. With over half of Dreamdata customers using LinkedIn Matched Audiences, this reflects a shift toward data-driven, account-based targeting. Teams are increasingly focused on reaching their ICP and relevant buying groups early, and staying visible across longer, multi-stakeholder customer journeys.

Dreamdata empowers B2B marketers to build hyper-specific LinkedIn audiences in minutes. You can combine unlimited filters across your entire go-to-market data, including every LinkedIn paid and organic touchpoint, and sync them to LinkedIn daily. This allows teams to target ICPs with more precision, and retarget companies and contacts showing re-engagement signals.



Reach more of your ideal customers

Dreamdata customers achieve LinkedIn company match rates above 90%, compared to an industry average of 29-62%.

Thank you for reading

(from our team)



You can start making the most of your LinkedIn Ads data with Dreamdata Free today

Dreamdata integrates with LinkedIn Ads to bring a suite of features from analytics, reporting and ROI to Signals and CAPI, that help B2B marketers measure and action their LinkedIn Ads data.

From tracking ad engagement and measuring ad influence on revenue, to automatically sending pipeline data back to LinkedIn Ads through CAPI, Dreamdata's Free plan enables B2B marketers to go beyond in-platform metrics and track campaign impact from first touch to closed-won revenue.

All your LinkedIn Ads metrics in one place

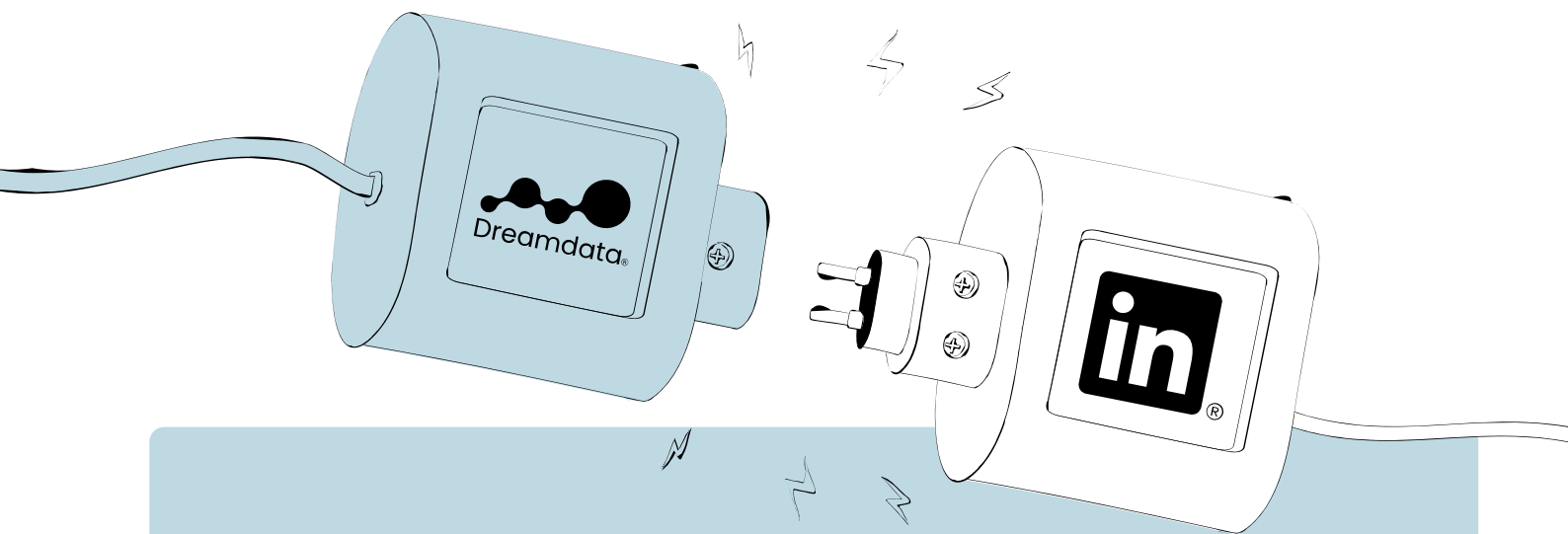
See the influence of LinkedIn Ads on pipeline and revenue. Compare LinkedIn Ads performance against the other ad networks.

LinkedIn Ads engagement data

See the companies that are engaging with your ads. Identify all the ICPs interacting with your ads who have not converted. Improve your customer journey mapping.

Send your pipeline data back to LinkedIn Ads

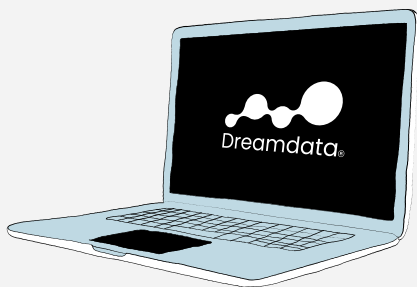
Automatically send accurate pipeline data daily to LinkedIn Ads. Enable LinkedIn to optimize campaigns towards conversions that matter.



Get started today at dreamdata.io



A word about the data



This report is built on aggregated data* from thousands of B2B customers covering

**+66
million
sessions**

A horizontal sequence of icons on a light blue background. From left to right: a question mark in a circle, two question marks in circles, a question mark in a circle, a star in a circle, and a trophy in a circle. The trophy icon is larger and has radiating lines around it, suggesting a goal or achievement.

across

**+3.5
million
customer
journeys**

to uncover the latest trends across advertising platforms.

To make the Benchmarks as accurate and reliable as possible, our methodology has been as follows:

1

Normalizing the data

to allow a fair comparison among accounts with different advertising spend.

2

Only including accounts with a minimum spend

to avoid non-representative data.

3

Using median and quartiles

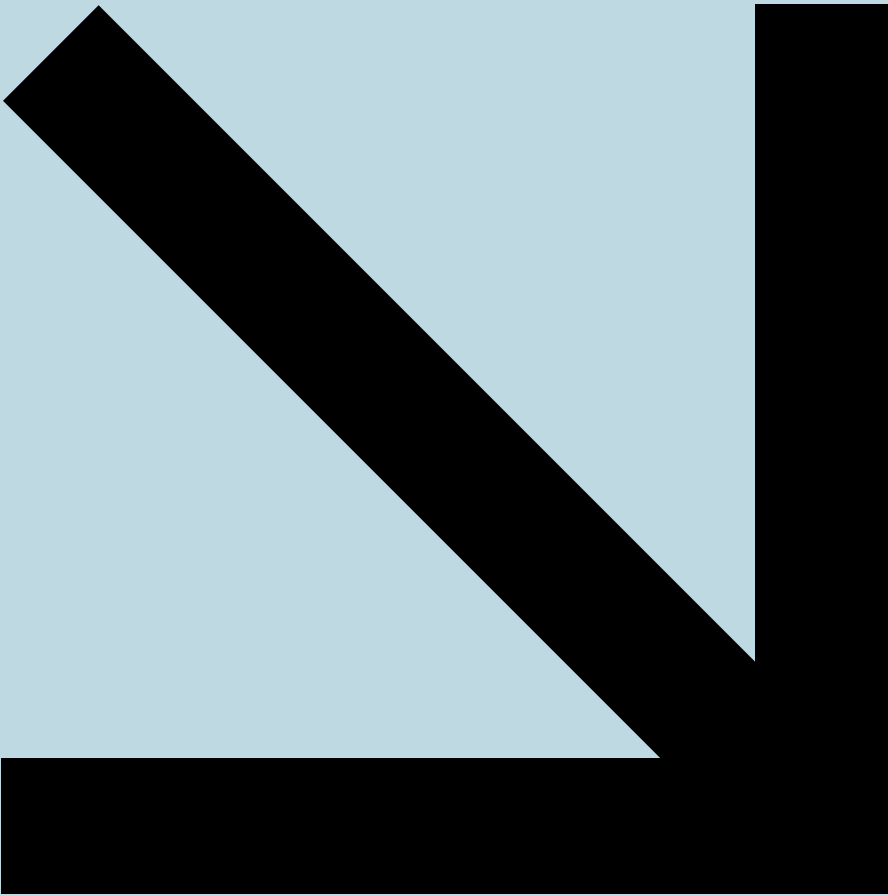
to remove the influence of outliers that might skew the metrics. Aligning definitions for the funnel stages through a setting that everyone can set up inside our product.

4

ROAS is calculated using our data-driven attribution model

on closed-won deals over a 12-month period. The data-driven attribution model identifies the most influential touches based on all historic customer journeys. Impressions are excluded from this model.

* At Dreamdata we take data security and privacy very seriously. Dreamdata has processed only non-PII data for this study. The data insights are aggregated, and a minimum number of data points (accounts has been introduced for every benchmark meaning it is not possible to identify individual companies. Only data from companies that have agreed to let us use data in benchmarks are included.



Visit Dreamdata

