

LEVERAGE

LinkedIn

Using LinkedIn to Reach More Prospects

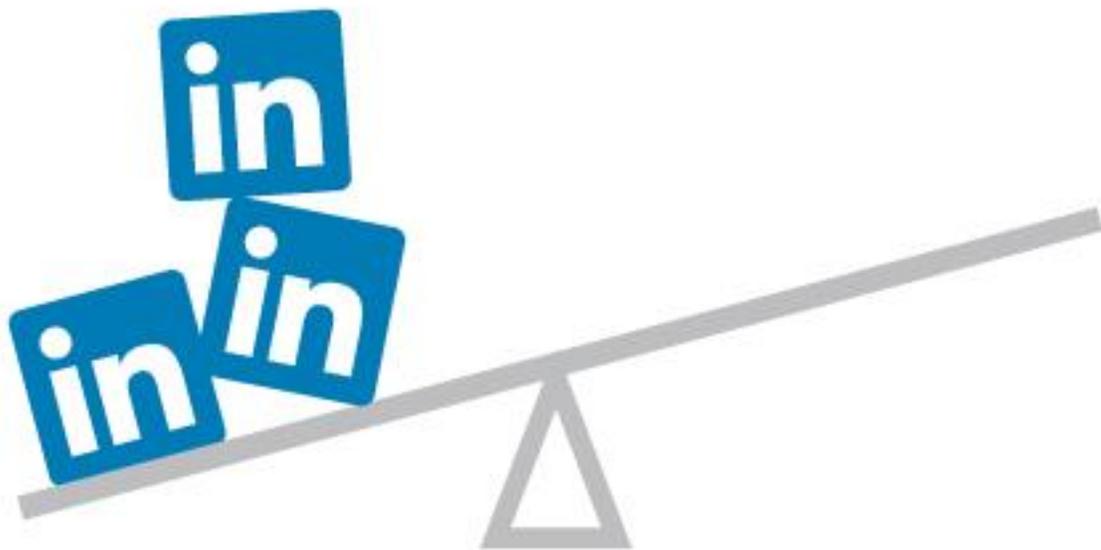


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Leverage LinkedIn

Originally viewed as a tool for recruiters and job seekers, today LinkedIn is the primary network for a significant number of business professionals. As LinkedIn has expanded their platform beyond paid memberships and job listings, which appeal to recruiters, they have created opportunities for business owners to reach the more than 400 million users.

Although the average user doesn't check this site as often as their Facebook profile, it is still a sizeable community worth targeting for B2B products. It is a great place to make these business connections, but this exposure isn't free. The LinkedIn advertising package allows companies to put their messages in front of decision makers with a relatively small investment.

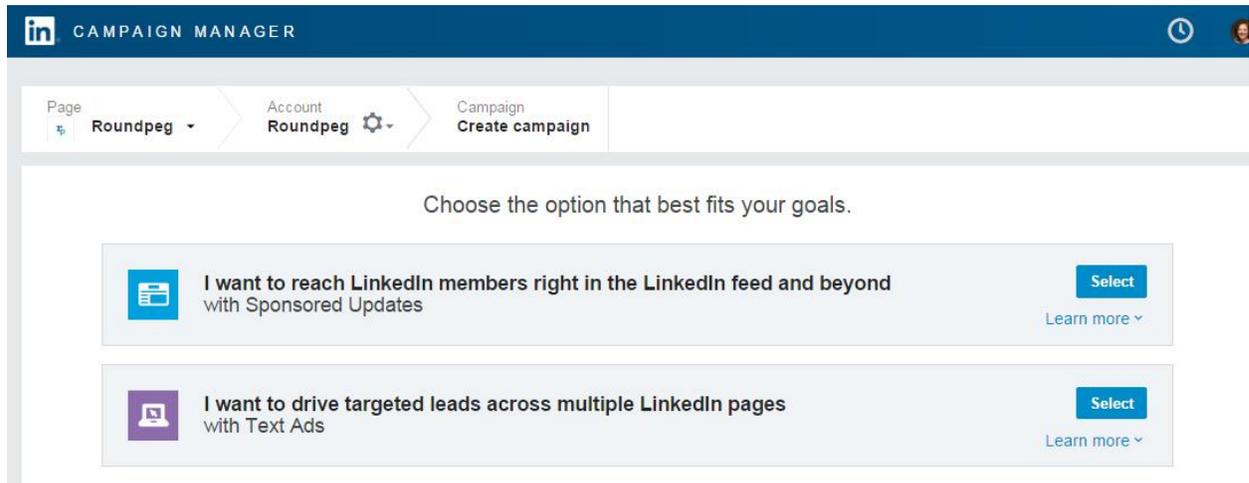
These types of advertisements are especially helpful for products in industry-specific niches. The vast majority of your LinkedIn community won't be interested in your product or service update, if, however, you can reach your very small, select audience they will be very interested.

LinkedIn delivers a well targeted campaign to just those very interested individuals. Of course the more precisely you can define your target, the more effective your ads will be. If you still think owners of "small to mid-size" businesses are your target, these ads won't be productive.

Start thinking about the following criteria when planning your advertisement: Geographic location, industry, job title or seniority of the decision maker. With that information in hand you are ready to plan your advertising campaign.

Advertising Options

LinkedIn offers both text ads and sponsored posts, which can drive prospects to your company page or directly to your website. There are advantages to both of these types of advertisements. When you log in to your advertising console the first choice you must make is which type of advertisement you want to run.

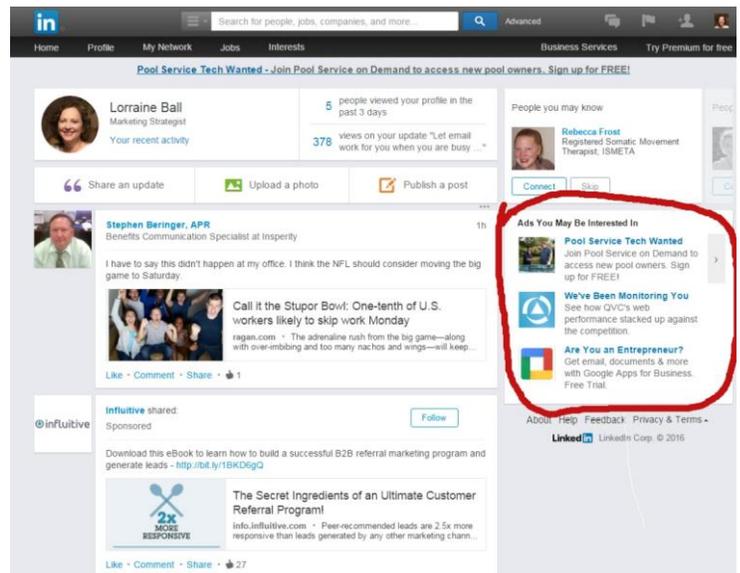


The Text Ad

Text ads appear in the sidebar of multiple pages including the Homepage, Profile page, Inbox, Company page and Search results page.

These ads are somewhat limiting in that they only appear on the desktop version of the program.

Text ads are limited to 25 characters for the headline and 75 more for the description. The featured image included with the advertisement can be no more than 50 x 50.



Sponsored Post

In contrast, there aren't the same limitations on the length of your content with a sponsored post. You have the flexibility to fill the time line with a full size image and a hyperlink. Sponsored posts will display on both desktop and mobile versions.

These ads are more likely to be read because the post feels less like a sales pitch to your audience. It is likely to be shared because it looks natural in the timeline. You can choose to feature an existing post, or create something new for the advertisement.

The downside is that the ad will only appear in the newsfeed on the home page.

Campaign name and language

Once you choose your ad type, you are asked to select a Campaign Name and language. Choose something which will have meaning a month or two from now after you have run multiple campaigns.

Unless you are running a multinational campaign your language choice is simply English.

Ad Design

Creating a Text Ad

Where should the ad go?

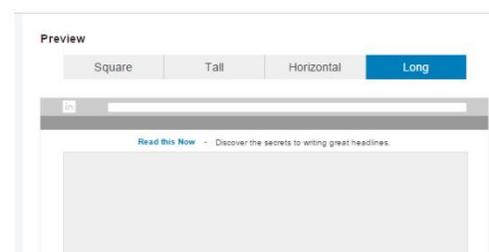
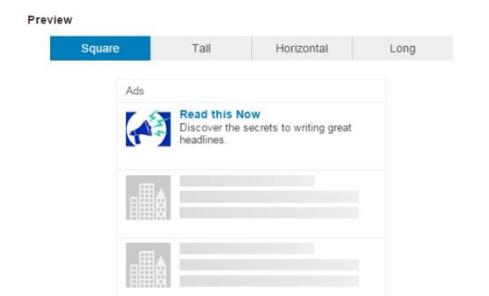
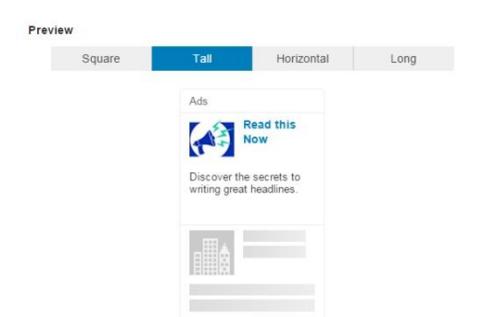
You can choose to drive people to your company page on LinkedIn or a landing page on your website. Our preference is always to drive people to a campaign specific landing page so you can collect more detailed information from prospects.

Designing the ad

This is relatively simple. You need to write a compelling headline consisting of 25 characters or less and then a description of no more than 75 characters. Your language needs to be compelling and commanding. It needs to be something to make me stop and pay attention.

You can add a 50 x 50 image. Keep the graphic simple because the detail will be lost in the small ad. I would also suggest fairly simple, but bold colors to stand out against the white of the sidebar.

Once you have built your ad, be sure to preview it in all the formats in which it will display: square, tall, horizontal and long.



Creating a Sponsored Post

From here you come to a crossroad. Do you want to use content you have previously published, or do you want to create content specifically for this advertising effort? To make this decision refer to your goals and objective and look through your previously published content to see if any of those posts accurately and succinctly express what you are trying to communicate.

While you can create a post just for an advertisement, it makes more sense to look at your blog posts and find one which has started to gain some traction.

The upside of using previously posted content is that it reads more naturally, less like advertising which generally results in higher click rates.

Start by reviewing the performance of various posts on your company page. Select one which is already garnering engagement such as likes and shares. Now you know this information is interesting to some of your audience so it makes sense to create a sponsored post to extend the reach.

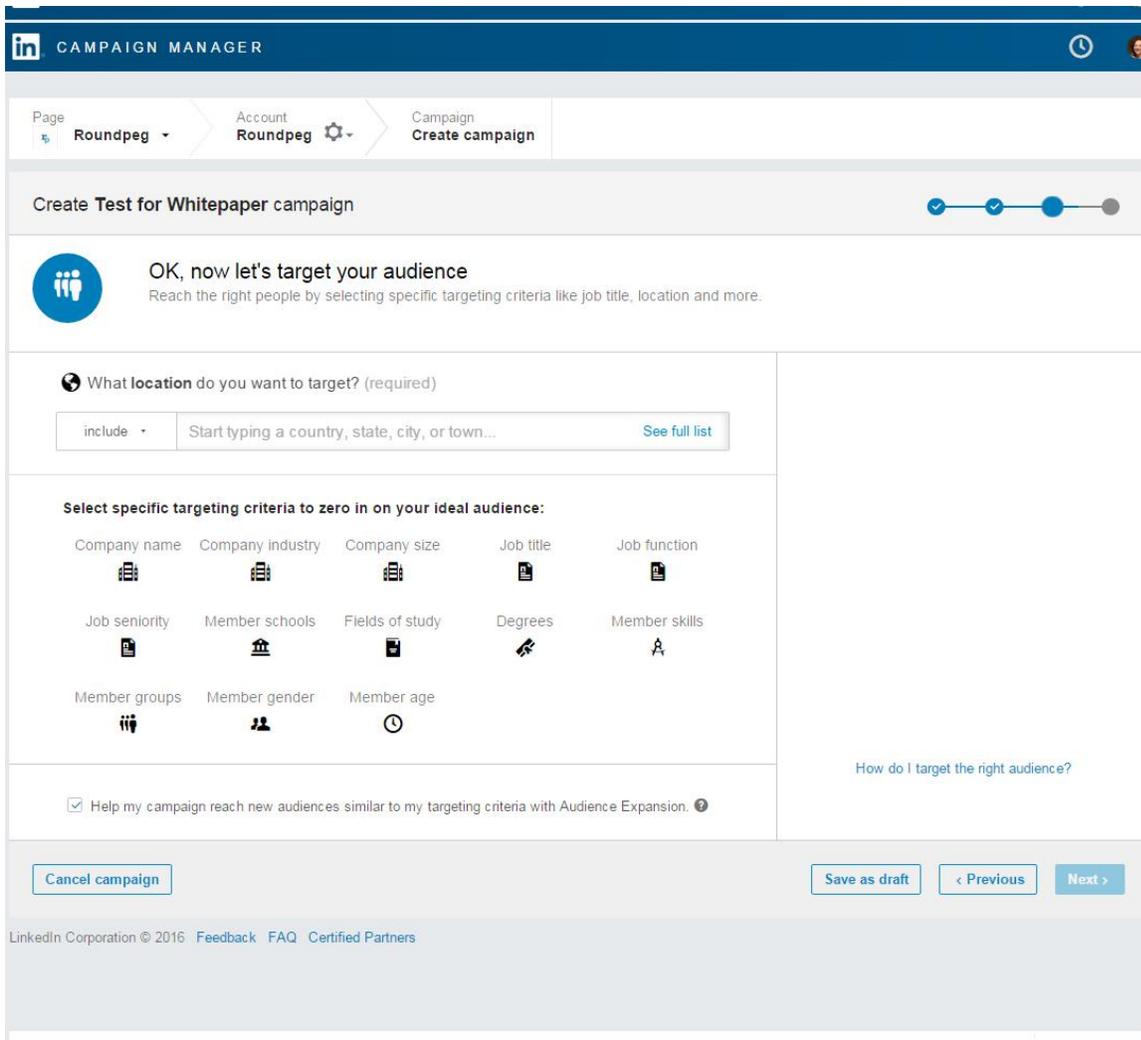
LinkedIn makes it easy to review all of your recent posts and simply select the one you wish to feature.

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn campaign creation interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Page Roundpeg', 'Account Roundpeg', and 'Campaign Create campaign'. Below this is a progress bar for 'Create English campaign'. The main heading is 'Which updates would you like to sponsor?' with a subtext: 'You can sponsor existing updates from your Company Page or create something brand new.' Below the heading, there are filters for 'View' (Available content (100), Sponsored content (0)) and 'Filter by' (All updates). There is also a 'Create new sponsored content' button and a 'Sponsor selected' button. The main content area is a table with columns: 'Select (1)', 'Ad', 'Likes', 'Comments', 'Created', and 'Actions'. Three updates are listed:

Select (1)	Ad	Likes	Comments	Created	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/>	 <p>The players have all left the field. What lingers after the game are the ads, well at least some of them. So who were the winners and losers of the "Ad Bowl" https://lnkd.in/eVY9gHT</p> <p>The Real Super Bowl Ad Winners Ma... Superbowl spots sold for a record-breaking \$5 million, who scored big, and who fumbled on the five-yard line? roundpeg.biz</p>	0	0	6 hours ago	Preview
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 <p>If you have a long sales cycle, lots of interactions from initial conversation to closing the deal, an automated email campaign can help. https://lnkd.in/eGZi3Rr</p> <p>RP_Whitepaper_ShortenSalesCycle_S... roundpeg.biz</p>	0	0	1 day ago	Preview
<input type="checkbox"/>	 <p>How do people feel when they visit your About Us page? Are they excited to meet you in person? If not, it is time for an update. https://lnkd.in/eUG9MQJ</p> <p>Bored to Death on Your About Page ... Web design tip: Your "About us" page isn't really about you. It should be about how you solve a clients problem roundpeg.biz</p>	0	0	2 days ago	Preview

Targeting your audience

Whether you have selected a text ad or a sponsored post, the next step is deciding who will see your advertisement. This is where LinkedIn really has an advantage, allowing you to focus business communications toward the kind of businesses you want to reach.



Location

This can be anything from city to continent. If your business is geographically constrained you can select a single city or metropolitan area, a series of cities or an entire state. Select as few or many geographic areas as make sense for your business.

Company Profile

LinkedIn demographics can be incredibly specific. You can include or exclude companies from your audience by using parameters such as company name, a specific industry or the number of employees.

Decision Maker Demographics

This is where LinkedIn really shines. Using job title, function and seniority you can pinpoint your messages so they bypass the gatekeepers and are presented directly to the decision makers. You can specify business owners or department heads that are most likely to need your product or service.

Skills, degrees, fields of study, gender or age can also be specified if these factors are relevant to your product. Be careful not to define your audience too narrowly or you may miss out on reaching many potential clients.

How Narrow Should Your Audience Be?

As you make selections, LinkedIn will show you how large or small your potential audience is, preventing you from wasting money overspending for too small an audience. LinkedIn recommends selecting between 1 and 20 variables to narrow your audience.

They also suggest keeping your target between 60,000 and 600,000 members for the best chance of success. While this number may make sense for larger companies, we have actually had great success with targets as narrow as 3,000 if we want to really drive a message home to a niche audience.

Budget and Duration

As with any type of marketing, before you set a budget, you need to clarify what your objective is. Are you trying to grow your email list or encourage people to sign up for a free trial, make an appointment or actually buy something?

Once you set your objective, you need to put a value on the outcome. That is easy if the objective is making a sale. You know what a customer is worth so you can set a budget based on the cost of acquiring a new client.

But what if the objective is further up the sales funnel? You should still calculate the value as a percentage of the total acquisition cost. For more on budgeting, check out our [Inbound Budget Worksheet](#) to start thinking about what size budget makes sense.

Now you are ready to set your budget.

Impressions or Clicks

There are two different pricing models: You can either pay per click or per impression.

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn Campaign Manager interface for creating a campaign. The breadcrumb trail is: Page Roundpeg > Account Roundpeg > Campaign Create campaign. The main heading is 'Create Sales Cycle campaign'. Below this is a progress indicator with four steps, the second of which is active. The main content area is titled 'Let's figure out how much you'd like to spend on your campaign' with the subtext 'Tell us your bid type and budget and when you'd like your campaign to start.' The form includes the following fields and options:

- Bid type:** Radio buttons for 'Cost per click (CPC)' (selected) and 'Cost per impressions (CPM)'. Below this is the text 'Pay when someone clicks your ad.'
- Bid:** A text input field containing '6.42'. To the right, it says 'Suggested bid to reach the majority of your audience is \$6.42. (Other advertisers are bidding between \$6.42 – \$10.49) Minimum bid: \$3.50.'
- Daily budget:** A text input field containing '25.00'. To the right, it says 'Minimum budget: \$10.00 Your campaign's actual daily spend may be up to 20% higher. Learn more.'
- Start Date:** Radio buttons for 'Start immediately' (selected) and 'Schedule start'. Next to 'Schedule start' is a date input field with the placeholder 'mm/dd/yyyy' and a calendar icon.

At the bottom of the form, there is a 'Show more' link and a link that says 'I want to learn more about campaign budgeting'. The footer contains three buttons: 'Cancel campaign', 'Save as draft', and 'Launch Campaign'.

CPC (cost-per-click) - In this model you pay every time someone clicks on your ad. There is a minimum of \$2/click which definitely makes it a higher cost than Google or Facebook. If you have a pretty narrow, very well targeted advertisement, then the majority of the people who see your ad are very well qualified. The likelihood of converting someone after they click through is fairly strong.

If you have an objective which is close to the end of the sales funnel, then CPC approach works.

CPM (cost per 1,000 impressions) - In contrast, the CPM is a much better alternative for simple awareness building campaigns. For a flat fee you are guaranteed a specific number of people in your segment will see your ad.

Daily Budget

In addition to the amount you will spend for ads, you may want to set a daily budget. This will allow you to monitor your advertisement and make adjustments if you aren't getting satisfactory results. It also acts as a trigger and your ad will stop displaying as soon as you reach the daily budget.

Often I use the CPC model, knowing I won't get many clicks, but I will get more impressions than I would if I paid for impressions. To make sure my ad stays visible, I need to make sure my daily budget is sufficient to get a few clicks every day and keep my ad visible in the timeline.

Duration

You can start the advertisement right away, or plan ahead for a campaign to run at some point in the future.

You have the ability to let your advertisement run indefinitely (not recommended), end on a specific day or when you have spent a specific amount of money. If you are promoting an event, the date is obviously the best choice, otherwise set a budget and let the ad run until the money is used up.

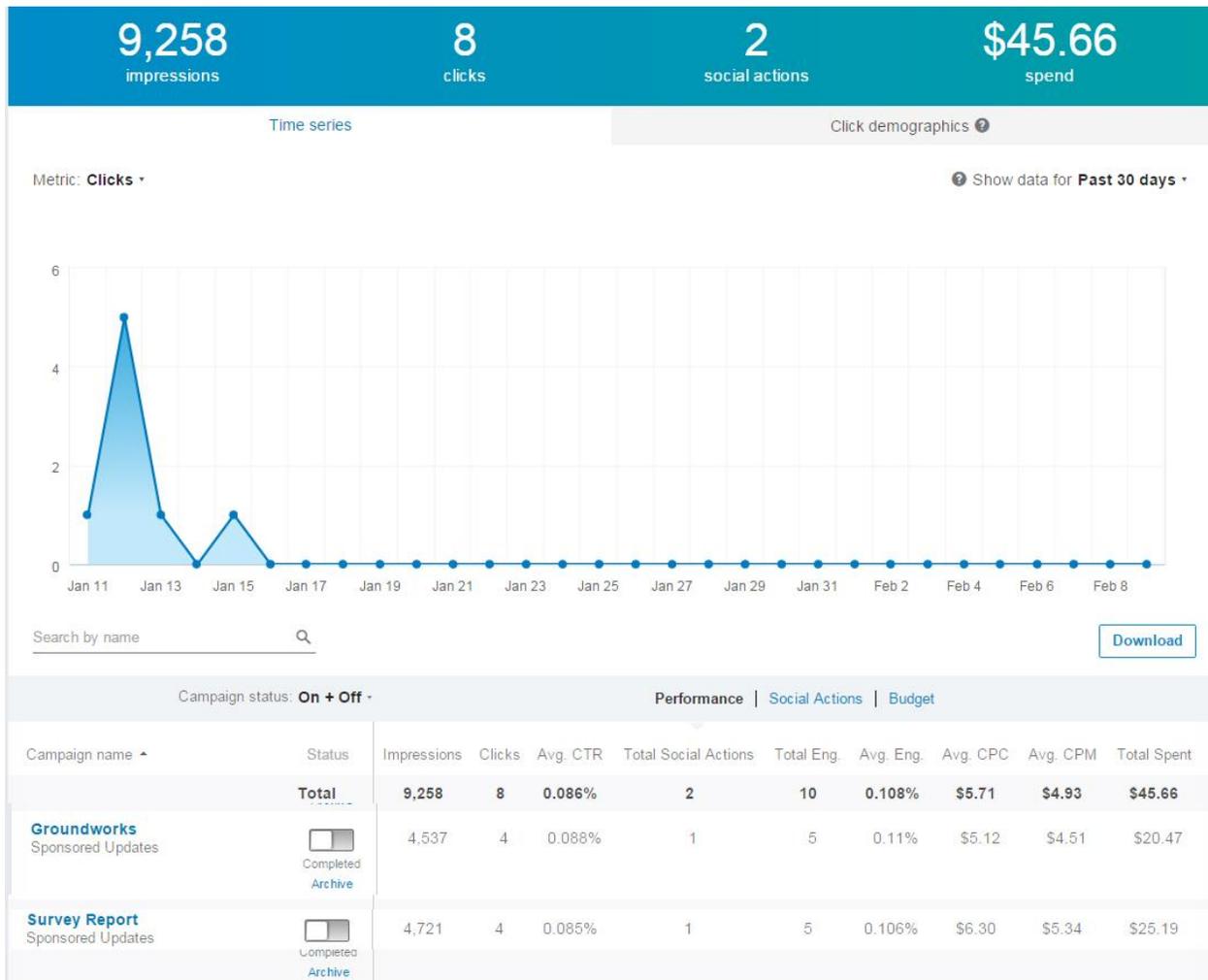
Just because the ad still has time left, does not mean you can set it and forget it. Check in regularly to see if you are getting clicks and conversions. If not, pause the ad, change it or close it and start over with a completely new ad.

For sponsored content, a week is about the right amount of time. You will see a fall off in interaction. That is a good signal that most people have seen the content and it is time to share something new.

Review your results

Remember the objective you set when you started this campaign? Once the ad has run, review your results to see if you accomplished your goal. You can use the LinkedIn dashboard to compare performance of different ads.

Which ones got lots of views and which ones really drove action. Use the results to adjust your strategy to develop new organic or paid content.



Help Wanted: LinkedIn Ads

LinkedIn Ads open up a lot of possibilities for small businesses to reach new audiences. Hopefully, your small business is getting the results you envision with your ad campaign. If you need help creating or maintaining a LinkedIn ad campaign, give us a call:

317-569-1396 or email at info@roundpeg.biz