REPORT

The State of Sales on LinkedIn for 2026

PhantomBuster



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Executive Summary

The past year has reshaped the way B2B teams sell. We've seen cold outreach cooling. Buying cycles stretched. And Al flooded inboxes with digital noise. Through all this turbulence, LinkedIn held its ground. It became the rare place where credibility still cuts through, and where real conversations can still turn into revenue.

And as we head into 2026, our data tells a story.

The teams winning on Linkedln aren't sending more messages. They're sending smarter ones. They pair automation with intention. They blend AI with human judgment. And they treat technology not as a shortcut, but as an amplifier.

At PhantomBuster, we've always believed in this. We think that automation should make people more human, not less. It turns out that the best-performing sellers in this report aren't the ones who automate everything. They're the ones who automate the right things, freeing up time for authentic engagement.

This report shows how today's sales professionals are adapting. It unpacks the benchmarks that matter, the behaviors separating top performers from the rest, and the emerging playbooks defining success in 2026. Ultimately, our data shows that human connection is still the competitive edge, and technology is most powerful when it helps elevate it.

Sincerely, **Guillaume Boiret**CEO, PhantomBuster





Methodology and Context

This survey gathered insights from B2B sales professionals in Q4 2025, including founders, SDRs, team leads, and account executives.

Respondents represented a mix of industries such as financial services, manufacturing, technology, and e-commerce. 72% were based in Europe or North America, and 81% worked in teams of five or fewer. Most handled mid-range deal sizes (\$5K-\$100K). See the appendix for further sample insights.

Data was collected through an online survey exploring:

- Connection request acceptance rates
- · Meetings and calls booked via LinkedIn
- · Al and automation adoption
- CRM integration and workflow efficiency
- Time investment and personalization practices

The goal was to understand how sales teams use LinkedIn heading into 2026, and the benchmarks, habits, and tools that drive success.

CHAPTER 1

LinkedIn Prospecting Benchmarks

This chapter establishes a baseline of how sales professionals currently use Linkedln, including typical activity and engagement patterns. Here, we can see where most teams stand today, along with what separates the top performers from the rest.



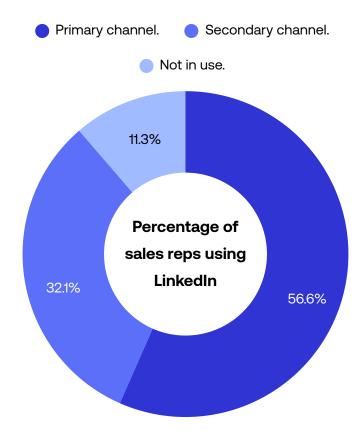
1. LinkedIn is the default platform for B2B sales

Nearly 9 in 10 sellers now rely on LinkedIn for prospecting, reflecting its role as the one channel where credibility and visibility still reliably convert. Over half treat LinkedIn as their primary sales channel, while only 11% remain inactive, meaning the platform is no longer optional for modern go-to-market teams.

This saturation shifts the competitive edge away from simply showing up on Linkedln. The advantage now belongs to sellers who refine their presence, personalize their outreach, and use tools intelligently to stand out.

PhantomBuster Lens:

When everyone is active on LinkedIn, automation alone isn't enough. *Relevant* automation becomes the differentiator. PhantomBuster helps you scale high-quality actions on LinkedIn to break through the noise.





2. Most sales teams rely on paid LinkedIn plans

Half of sales reps now rely on Sales Navigator, confirming its position as the default workspace for high-intent outreach.

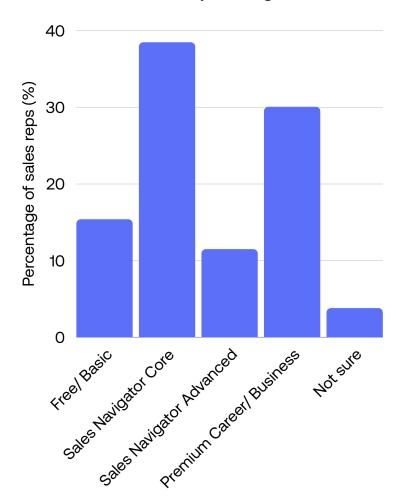
Another third invest in Premium Career or Business, showing that sellers increasingly treat LinkedIn as a paid acquisition channel.

With only 15% on the free plan, the data shows that meaningful prospecting rarely happens without upgrading.

PhantomBuster Lens:

If you invest in LinkedIn, your competitive edge needs to go beyond "buying the right plan." PhantomBuster can turn paid LinkedIn access into scalable, signal-based workflows that enhance the value of tools like Sales Navigator.

LinkedIn plan usage





3. Reps experience mixed outcomes on LinkedIn

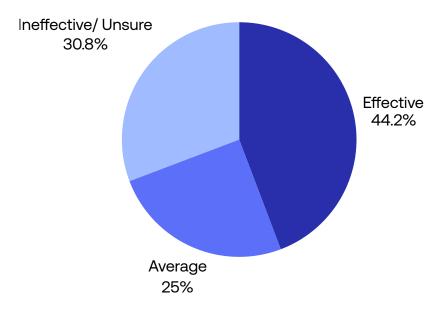
Almost half of sellers say LinkedIn is one of their most effective channels, yet nearly a third find it ineffective. This shows a widening gap between those who've adapted to the platform's evolution and those still struggling with saturation.

When asked how this had changed over the past year, 31% say LinkedIn is working better than last year, while 23% say performance has declined and 29% report no change. This divide points to shifting algorithms, rising competition, and inconsistent outreach quality.

PhantomBuster Lens:

If teams target the right leads, personalize accordingly, and use tools that support (rather than substitute) these workflows, they should stay on the "effective" side of the curve.

"How effective is LinkedIn for you, compared to other channels?"





4. Connection request volumes are polarized

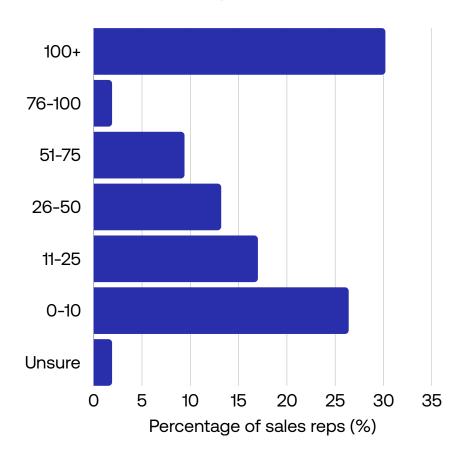
Nearly a third (30%) of sellers send 100+ connection requests per week, showing a heavy reliance on high-volume outreach and frequent use of automation.

At the same time, 26% send fewer than 10 requests, revealing a sharp divide between consistent prospectors and those who engage only occasionally. This split suggests that teams approach LinkedIn with very different levels of intent, capacity, and tooling.

PhantomBuster Lens:

When activity levels vary this widely, volume alone becomes meaningless. What matters is using automation to scale *qualified* outreach. PhantomBuster helps you apply consistent, targeted actions, even when weekly send volumes fluctuate.

Connection requests sent/ week





5. Connection acceptance rates vary widely

Most sellers cluster in the 30–40% acceptance range, but outcomes diverge sharply from there.

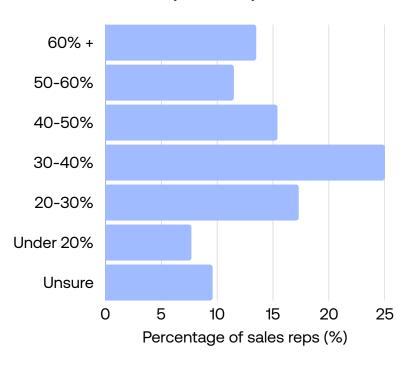
Just 13% reach above 60%, while 25% fall under 30%. This spread points to inconsistent personalization practices, uneven ICP targeting, and varied message quality across teams.

And the 10% who don't track acceptance at all highlight a broader performance-measurement gap in LinkedIn outreach.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Acceptance rates rise when automation supports *relevance*. PhantomBuster helps sellers enrich profiles, validate ICPs, and run personalized workflows, turning each request into something that earns a reply.

Connection request acceptance rate





Sending fewer requests correlates with higher acceptance rates

Reps sending fewer than 25 requests per week are almost twice as likely to achieve strong acceptance rates (≥40%) compared with those sending 26 or more.

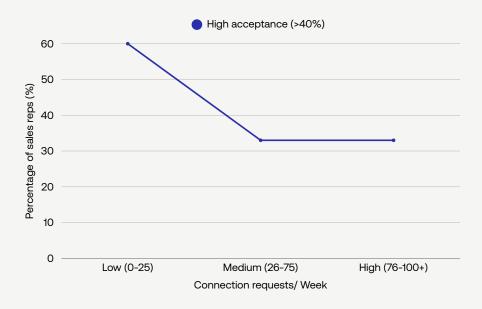
The data shows that the more targeted the outreach, the better the response. High-volume campaigns often dilute relevance and can trigger spam-like patterns.

Smaller, curated batches allow for better targeting, cleaner profiles, and more personalized messaging.

PhantomBuster Lens:

When volume goes up, relevance often drops... unless it's automated intelligently. PhantomBuster lets you scale targeted sends, ensuring volume never comes at the expense of credibility or acceptance rates.

Request volume vs. Acceptance rate





6. Personalized requests are the norm

Nearly half of reps (49%) personalize most or all of their connection requests, underscoring that relevance is a priority. These sellers prioritize context, credibility, and stronger first-touch impressions.

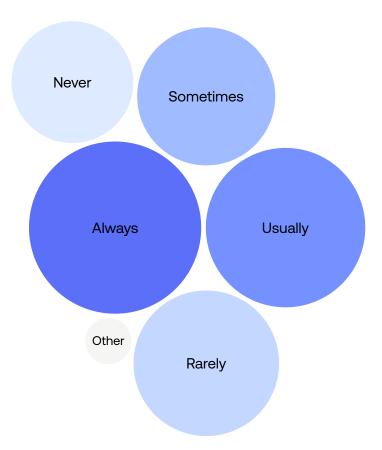
However, 32% rarely or never personalize, favoring speed and scale over tailoring. This suggests some teams optimize for efficiency, while others invest in precision.

The remaining 17% mix personalized and standard requests, reflecting a hybrid approach that balances volume with basic customization.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Personalization doesn't need to be slow. You can automate it, pulling profile signals, enriching data, and making every request feel intentional.

"Do you personalize your connection requests?"





Consistent personalization drives better results

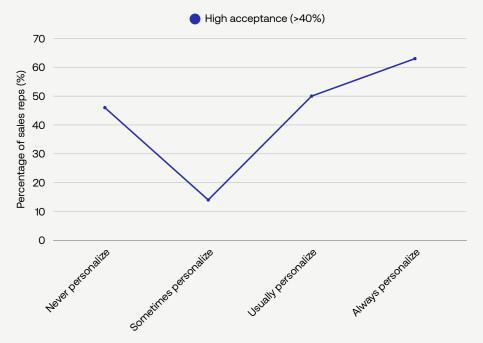
Reps who always personalize their connection requests are 4-5× more likely to achieve high acceptance rates (≥40%) compared to those who personalize only occasionally. This suggests that *consistency* (not just personalization itself) is a core driver of performance.

Even partial personalization pays off. But the steep drop in performance among "sometimes" personalizers shows that inconsistent effort can harm credibility, often performing worse than a fully standardized but coherent approach.

PhantomBuster Lens:

With the right automation tool, you can pull context and schedule tailored requests, ensuring personalization is consistent, not sporadic.







7. Most sellers make LinkedIn profile optimization a priority

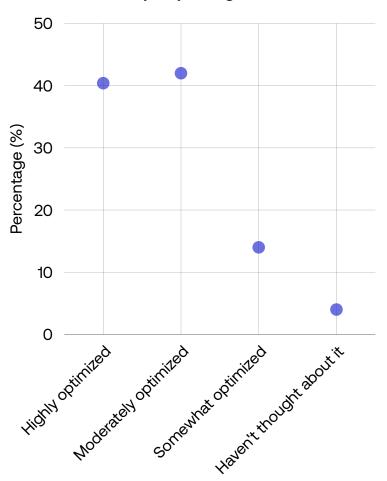
A combined 83% of respondents have either highly or moderately optimized profiles, signalling that professional presentation is no longer optional for modern outreach. Sellers increasingly recognize that prospects check profiles before accepting requests or replying, making credibility a first-impression metric.

Only 14% admit to minimal optimization and 4% haven't considered it, showing that the market is maturing. Reps know that strong photos, clear value propositions, and trust signals (like recommendations) can directly influence response rates.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Your profile is your landing page. A polished profile will improve conversion across every outreach sequence, and boost your credibility before you even hit 'Send.'

"How optimized is your LinkedIn profile for prospecting?"





Optimized profiles get double the connection acceptance rates

Acceptance rates rise sharply as profile quality improves. Sellers with well-optimized profiles are more than twice as likely to achieve high acceptance rates (≥40%) compared to those with neglected or basic profiles.

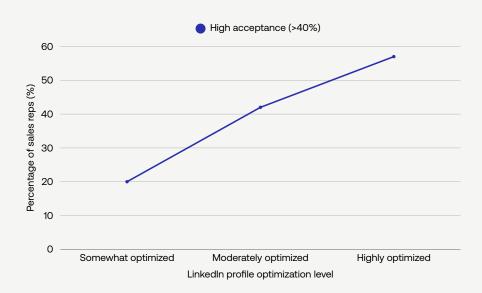
Even moderate optimization makes a measurable difference.

Meanwhile, 80% of sellers with minimally optimized profiles report acceptance rates below 40%, highlighting how quickly trust erodes when credibility signals are missing.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Strengthening your profile is one of the highest-leverage improvements you can make. It boosts every downstream metric, from acceptance to pipeline velocity.

Profile optimization vs. Acceptance rate





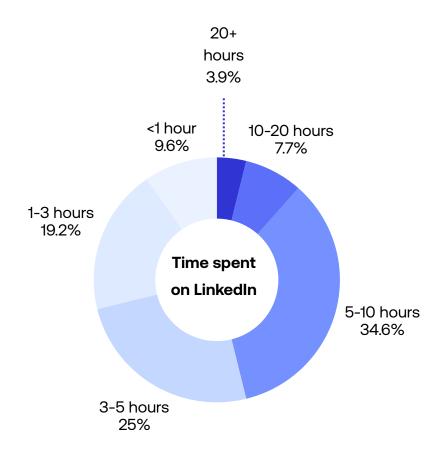
8. LinkedIn is a steady habit for most reps, not a deep commitment

Most teams fall into a mid-intensity usage pattern. 61% spend 3–10 hours per week on LinkedIn, which is enough to stay visible and keep conversations moving. Only 10% spend under an hour, suggesting that low-commitment activity is the exception rather than the norm.

At the other end of the spectrum, fewer than 10% invest more than 10 hours weekly, indicating that heavy, hands-on prospecting is relatively rare. For most reps, LinkedIn sits in the "steady but manageable" category. It's a channel that requires consistency, rather than constant attention.

PhantomBuster Lens:

You don't necessarily need extreme time investment to succeed. It's more about *how* you use those hours to build meaningful connections.



9. Half of LinkedIn sellers send less than 10 messages per week

Most reps send fewer messages to stay targeted and intentional. Our data shows that 52% of sellers send fewer than 10 outbound messages per week, showing that Linkedln outreach is shifting toward selective, high-intent communication.

This pace suggests reps prefer warming leads through engagement, rather than pushing volume.

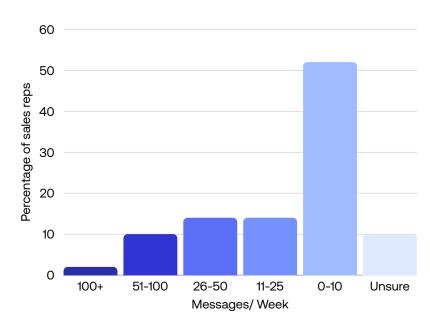
The 10% who don't track activity may be relying on fragmented tools, which can obscure patterns and weaken consistency.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Thoughtful outreach always beats volume. A little automation can help teams stay consistent while keeping conversations genuine.



DMs/InMails sent per week





Higher messaging volume can book more meetings... to a point

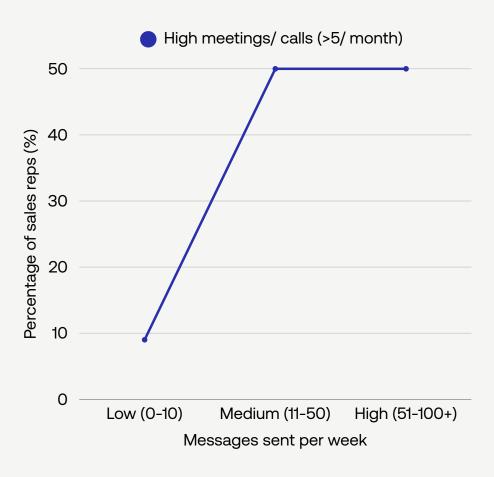
Reps sending more than 11 messages per week are far more likely to book frequent meetings than low-volume senders. But the data also shows an early plateau, as medium and high senders perform almost identically.

That suggests the real driver isn't sheer output, but the consistency and timing behind it. Sellers who maintain a steady cadence seem to benefit more than those who simply ramp up volume.

PhantomBuster Lens:

This is a reminder that outreach works best when it's paced, not pushed. Consistency is beneficial, but teams shouldn't drift into unnecessary volume for the sake of it.

Messaging volume vs. Conversions





10. Most LinkedIn outreach only converts to a few meetings

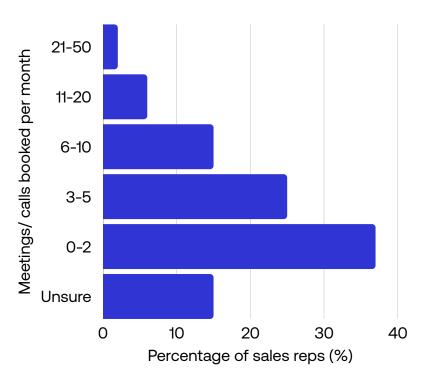
Nearly two-thirds of sellers book five or fewer meetings per month from LinkedIn, showing that conversion is limited for most teams. High-output success is uncommon, with only 7% securing more than ten meetings monthly.

There is also a sizeable group that doesn't track results. This suggests many reps are operating without clear visibility into what's working. This makes it harder to refine messaging, improve timing, and identify which leads are actually responding.

PhantomBuster Lens:

More activity doesn't necessarily yield more conversations. Instead, make sure you target people who will be genuinely interested in your brand.

Meetings/ calls booked from LinkedIn





Takeaways

LinkedIn is the default prospecting channel, with nearly **9 in 10 sellers** relying on it and over half treating it as their primary outreach platform. But this ubiquity means competition is intense. Simply being active is no longer a differentiator. The common thread across every high-performing metric is consistency, clarity, and relevance... not quantity.

Most reps spend **3–10 hours per week** on the platform and prioritise quality engagement over scale. But performance varies widely. While **44% say LinkedIn is one of their most effective channels**, almost a third say the opposite.

The winners prioritize quality outreach over output. For example, reps who send fewer than 25 requests per week are almost twice as likely to achieve strong acceptance rates as high-volume senders. Similarly, consistency in personalization is a major divider. Those who always personalize are 4–5 times more likely to achieve high acceptance rates.

Profiles are another decisive factor. Sellers with **highly optimised profiles** are more than twice as likely to see **strong acceptance rates**. Prospects clearly check who they're speaking to before replying, making credibility a conversion lever rather than a nice-to-have.

Across messaging behaviour, most sellers keep volume low. **52% send fewer than 10 outbound messages per week**, and the majority book only a handful of meetings monthly. Even when volume increases, success plateaus quickly, suggesting that cadence, timing, and follow-up discipline matter more than aggressive output.

CHAPTER 2

The Role of Al, Automation, and CRMs

In this chapter, we explore the tech behind today's LinkedIn prospecting. The data reveals a mixed picture. These tools don't always save time, but they do drive better performance overall. Here's how sales teams are using (or avoiding) them, and what impact that has on their results.



1. Automation is the norm for Linkedin prospecting

Four out of five sellers use some form of automation on LinkedIn, showing that manual outreach is no longer the industry default.

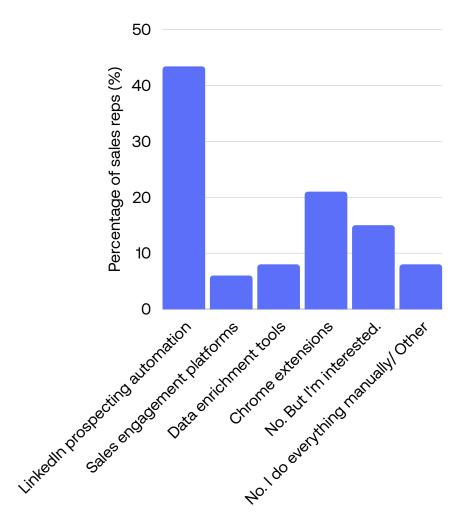
The biggest group (43%) relies on dedicated prospecting tools, while smaller segments use Chrome extensions or dataenrichment add-ons to support more targeted workflows.

Only 5.7% work fully manually, and even among non-users, 15% plan to adopt automation soon. This indicates that sellers increasingly view automation as basic infrastructure, not an optional boost.

PhantomBuster Lens:

This spread suggests teams are mixing tools to cover gaps in their workflows. PhantomBuster can support LinkedIn outreach from A-Z, including targeting and outreach sequences.

"Do you use any automation/ sales tools?"





2. Most teams automate to work faster; not to outscale competitors

The dominant motivation behind LinkedIn automation is efficiency. Nearly 80% of sellers use tools to save time or scale outreach without adding more manual work. This shows that automation is used for keeping up with daily prospecting demands, not a tactic for aggressive volume.

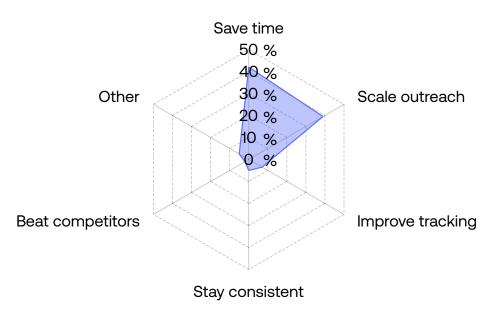
More advanced reasons, like improving tracking (7%) or maintaining consistent cadences (5%), remain niche, suggesting many teams still use automation in its simplest form.

Only 2% cite competitive pressure, which implies sellers aren't reacting to what others are doing. They're just trying to create more breathing room in their own workflow.

PhantomBuster Lens:

The data shows that automation isn't replacing strategy; it's supporting it. And that's healthy. It frees sellers to focus on better conversations, not just more actions.

"Why do you use LinkedIn automation tools?"





Automation can improve results, but it doesn't exactly "save time"

Automation users are the only group consistently reporting more than five meetings per month, perhaps because it supports winning behaviors.

But automation doesn't necessarily reduce time on Linkedln. Even though 40% use it to "save time," it mostly reallocates it.

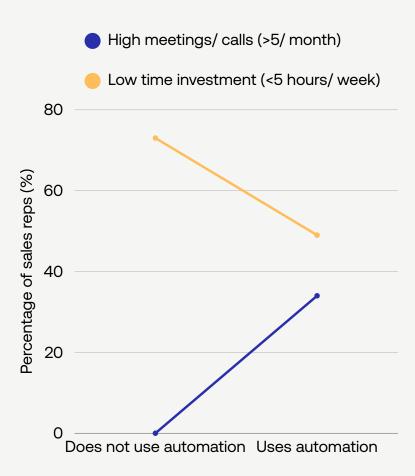
51% of automation users spend over five hours per week on the platform, compared to 27% of non-users.

Automation may lower cognitive load, but it doesn't remove the need for active prospecting. It simply shifts users into more impactful activities. It may also show that those investing in automation take LinkedIn more seriously.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Automation helps you do *better*. When the manual work is handled, you can focus your time on higher-value tasks.

Automation usage vs. Time investment vs. Conversions





3. All is becoming a standard part of LinkedIn prospecting

Nearly 58% of LinkedIn sellers already use AI, showing that AI-assisted prospecting is moving firmly into the mainstream. The fact that 38% use it extensively (sometimes daily) suggests AI is part of many teams' core rhythm.

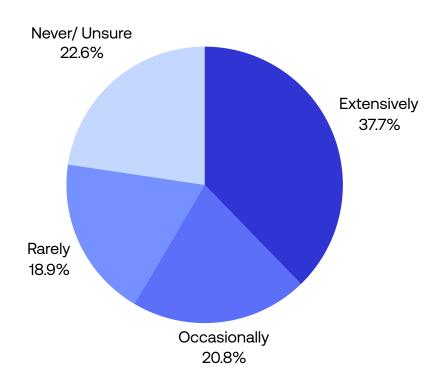
Among non-users, 15% plan to adopt it soon, indicating that uptake is still rising. Only a minority explicitly avoid Al, and even they may be relying on tools with Al features built in.

The 6% who are unsure highlight how blurred the line has become between automation, enrichment, and generative Al. Sellers may be using Al unawares, showing how deeply Al is embedded in workflows.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Used thoughtfully, Al helps sellers stay focused on the conversations that matter.

"How often do you use AI?"





Automation is universal across teams, but AI is more popular with solo workers

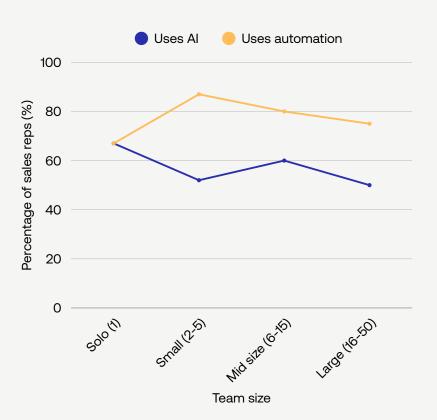
Automation remains consistent regardless of team size. All usage, however, follows a different pattern. Solo professionals show the highest adoption, likely leaning on All to compensate for limited bandwidth.

Mid-size teams have the highest combined adoption of both Al and automation, indicating a more integrated tech stack as teams grow. Larger teams report slightly lower Al usage, which may reflect stricter processes, slower tooling changes, or heavier reliance on established workflows.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Automation helps everyone stay consistent, while Al is embraced most where flexibility and speed matter most.

Team size vs. Automation/ Al usage





4. ChatGPT dominates Al usage for sales on LinkedIn

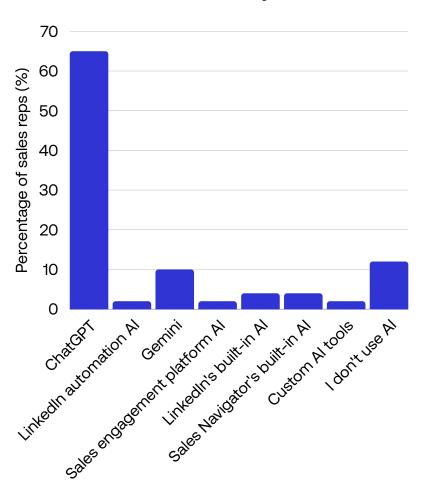
Two-thirds of respondents rely on ChatGPT as their primary Al tool for prospecting work, far outpacing every other option. This suggests sellers prefer flexible, general-purpose Al over the more constrained features built into LinkedIn or Sales Navigator. Only 10% use Al embedded in automation or engagement platforms, indicating that integrated Al is still early in adoption or perceived as too limited.

Native LinkedIn and Sales Navigator AI features also see low uptake, reinforcing that in-platform AI is not yet widely used. The overall pattern points to sellers stitching together their own AI stack rather than relying on any single ecosystem. As AI features inside enterprise tools mature, this gap may narrow. But for now, general-purpose models are the default.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Al works best when it complements existing workflows rather than locking teams into one rigid system.

"Which AI tools do you use?"





5. Most reps use AI to stay visible on LinkedIn, not to run outreach

Nearly half of respondents (44%) turn to AI for creating posts, confirming that content generation is the dominant use case. This suggests sellers lean on AI to maintain a steady presence on the feed.

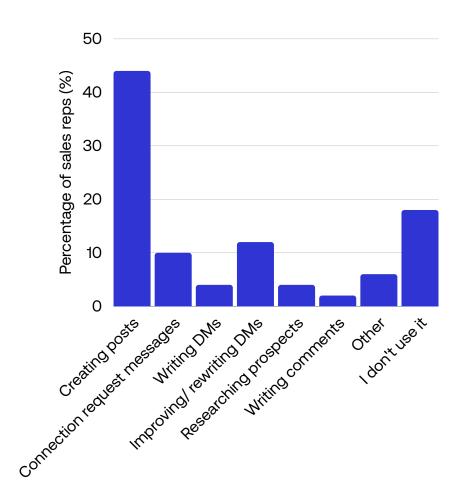
Message-related uses (drafting requests, improving DMs, refining follow-ups) account for around 26%, indicating that AI plays a more assistive role once conversations begin.

Very few respondents use AI for prospect research or commenting, which implies these areas still feel too nuanced or high-stakes to automate. Taken together, the data shows that AI helps sellers scale visibility and idea generation, while the more relational parts of prospecting remain human-led.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Al boosts consistency, but the best results come when it handles the heavy lifting, not the human connection.

"What do you use AI for?"





Heavy Al users book more meetings, but they also spend more time on the platform

Extensive Al users are 3.5× more likely to book over five meetings per month than those who rarely or never use it. But Al doesn't immediately reduce time spent on LinkedIn. 53% of heavy Al users still invest more than five hours per week.

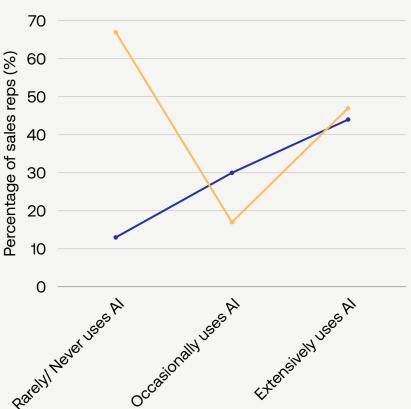
The biggest time spenders are actually the occasional Al users, 83% of whom spend over five hours weekly. This implies that dabbling with Al creates extra work. In contrast, consistent users seem to integrate Al more efficiently, achieving better outcomes without losing time.

PhantomBuster Lens:

From our perspective, the goal isn't to cut time. It's to channel it into higher-impact actions. When used well, Al tends to amplify good habits rather than add noise.

Al usage vs. Time investment vs. Conversions

- High meetings/ calls (>5/ month)
- Low time investment (<5 hours/ week)</p>





6. Over half of teams still manage their LinkedIn activity manually

More than half of respondents (56%) don't have LinkedIn connected to their CRM, either updating activity manually (40%) or not using a CRM at all (15%).

Only 10% have a fully synced setup, showing a disconnect between conversations (LinkedIn) and the pipeline (the CRM).

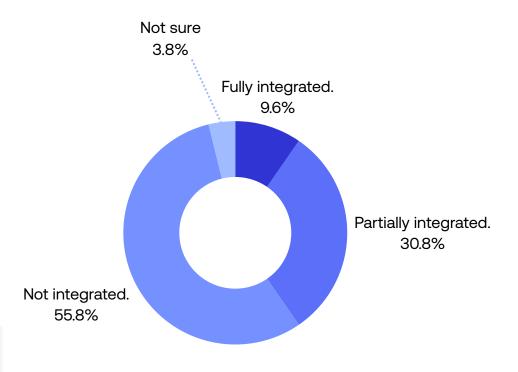
With 31% reporting partial integration, most teams are still piecing together their own processes, often leading to inconsistent data and missed follow-ups. This explains why many sellers struggle with visibility. Pipeline signals get lost, and tracking becomes guesswork.

Smoother LinkedIn-to-CRM workflows would give teams a significant advantage.

PhantomBuster Lens:

Teams perform best when data moves cleanly between systems. Without manual admin, reps can focus on conversations instead of copy-pasting into their CRM.

"Does your LinkedIn sync with your CRM?"



Full CRM integration correlates with more conversions, but deeper time investment

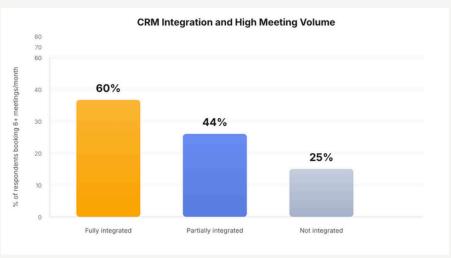
Sellers with fully integrated CRMs are far more likely to book over five meetings per month; 50%, compared with roughly a quarter of those with partial or no integration.

This suggests that with synced CRM workflows, opportunities are less likely to be missed.

In contrast, partial and non-integrated setups produce nearly identical outcomes, implying that fragmented processes erase most of the CRM's potential value.

However, fully integrated users also spend the most time on Linkedln, which may reflect the deeper engagement that accurate data enables.





PhantomBuster Lens:

It seems that LinkedIn-CRM integration doesn't free up time, but it does make time spent more productive.



Takeaways

Automation and AI have become foundational in LinkedIn prospecting. 80% of sellers now use automation and 58% use AI. Automation, AI, and CRM integration are all independently linked to higher meeting volumes, suggesting that tech-enabled workflows consistently outperform manual ones.

Yet the data shows that these tools don't automatically reduce time spent on Linkedln. In many cases, they increase it... but in ways that correlate with better outcomes. Automation users are the only group consistently booking more than five meetings per month, and heavy AI users are 3.5× more likely to hit that benchmark. Time isn't being saved, exactly, but it's being reallocated toward higher-leverage activities like targeting, refining messages, and following up.

Al is used far more for content creation than for outreach, with 44% relying on it to stay visible on the feed. Message-related use cases remain secondary, underscoring that sellers still prefer to control tone, context, and personalization manually. ChatGPT takes the lead (65%), while built-in Al tools across LinkedIn and Sales Navigator remain underused.

CRM integration is the biggest operational gap. 56% of teams don't sync LinkedIn with their CRM, and only 10% have full integration. This disconnect hinders follow-up, makes performance hard to measure, and erodes the benefits of both automation and Al. And the payoff for full integration is clear, with nearly double the conversion rates.

The next chapter looks at who is achieving these results. We'll divide sellers into clear LinkedIn prospecting archetypes and outlining the playbooks teams can adopt to mirror their success.

CHAPTER 3

The Archetype Framework (+ Playbooks)

There are four main archetypes of LinkedIn prospecting, based on how professionals balance connection volume, acceptance rates, and time investment. Each archetype reflects a different philosophy. To help teams adapt these insights, we've included two practical playbooks. There's one for accelerating reach, and another for cruising toward higher conversion.



The four LinkedIn prospecting archetypes

Although lower-volume senders often achieve higher acceptance rates, that's only one part of the picture. When we zoom out, four clear prospecting archetypes emerge, each representing a different philosophy of Linkedln outreach.

1. Accelerators: High output, high returns

Accelerators send a lot of connection requests (typically 76–100+ per week) while still maintaining strong acceptance rates around 45%. They invest more time than average (~7.5 hours/week), but they convert that time efficiently, achieving 6 accepted requests per hour, the highest of any group.

Accelerators succeed because they scale with intention. Their volume is high, but not sloppy. They typically refine ICPs, tighten filters, and rely heavily on sequencing and enrichment to maintain relevance at speed. Their performance shows that high volume is not inherently spammy. Poor targeting is.

Where they win	Where they must be careful
Fast pipeline creation Active testing loops High outbound consistency	There's always a risk that experimentation or sheer volume could overwhelm personalization.



2. Spinners: High output, low yield

Like Accelerators, Spinners send 76–100+ requests per week, but their acceptance rate drops to ~25%, cutting efficiency nearly in half (3.33 accepted/hour). They invest the same amount of time as Accelerators (~7.5 hours/week) but get significantly weaker results.

They demonstrate volume without strategy. Spinners often over-index on automation or speed, pushing outbound activity that isn't personalized enough, isn't targeted enough, or arrives too quickly after profile visits. They work hard, just not in the right direction.

Where they win	Where they struggle	What they need
Raw reach	Low reply quality	Better ICP clarity
Broad market testing	Reputation risk	Stronger personalization
Early-stage visibility	Poor downstream conversion	Improved message context



3. Cruisers: Low volume, precise converters

Cruisers send far fewer requests (0–25 per week) but achieve the highest acceptance rates (~56%) of any archetype. Their efficiency appears low (0.53 accepted/hour) because they invest less total time, but their conversion quality is unmatched.

Cruisers prioritize meaningful interactions over scale. They take time to personalize, build context, and warm prospects. Their success suggests strong positioning or strong organic visibility, supported by thoughtful outreach.

Where they win	Where they must be careful
Brand building High-quality pipeline Relationship-led selling	Low volume means slow growth, unless paired with powerful content or inbound signals.



4. Drifters: Low activity, unpredictable results

Drifters also send fewer than 25 requests per week, but unlike Cruisers, their acceptance rate is lower (~35%) and their time investment is the smallest (~4 hours/week). Their efficiency is the lowest of the four (0.43 accepted/hour).

This group is known for irregular activity, inconsistent messaging, and limited attention to tuning their LinkedIn presence. Drifters often operate without a clear structure or cadence, making their outcomes sporadic.

Where they win	Where they struggle	What they need
Low effort Minimal risk	Pipeline consistency Relationship-building Visibility	A repeatable weekly workflow Basic profile optimization Clearer ICP definition

Archetype	Behavior	Median request volume	Median acceptance rate	Median hours/ week	Efficiency (Accepted requests/ hour)
Accelerator	High connection requests (76- 100+) High acceptance (>40%)	100	45%	7.5	6
Spinner	High connection requests (76- 100+) Low acceptance (<40%)	100	25%	7.5	3.33
Cruiser	Low connection requests (0- 25) High acceptance (>40%)	5	56%	5.2	0.53
Drifter	Low connection requests (0- 25) Low acceptance (<40%)	5	35%	4	0.43



The Playbooks: Which archetype should you follow?

For teams prioritizing efficiency at scale, the Accelerator model creates the strongest combination of volume and acceptance (if relevance is tightly maintained). For those optimizing for high acceptance and higher-quality pipeline, Cruisers offer a more sustainable, lower-volume path. On the other side of the coin, Spinners illustrate what happens when scale outruns strategy. And Drifters reveal how easy it is to fall into inconsistent, low-return activity.

Playbook	Accelerators	Cruisers
Goal	Maximize accepted requests /hour	Maximize acceptance %
Core KPI	6 requests accepted/ hour	45-60% acceptance rates
Strategy	Scale outreach volume (75–100+ requests/week) while maintaining relevance. Use automation to streamline tasks, but keep messaging human.	Focus on tighter ICPs, personalized requests, and slower, higher-quality outreach. Prioritize connection context and thoughtful follow-up.



1. The Accelerator Playbook

This playbook is designed for sellers who want high output without sacrificing precision. The goal is to send more campaigns to the *right* people, while maintaining quality signals that keep acceptance rates strong.

Goal: Maximize accepted requests per hour while keeping weekly volume at a sustainable, platform-safe level.

Core KPIs:

- 6 accepted requests/hour (benchmark from Accelerators)
- 45-50% acceptance rate
- Weekly volume 75-100+ requests

Steps:

- 1. Treat targeting as the first lever of scale: Before increasing volume, refine ICP filters based on seniority, geography, mutual interests, shared signals, or recent activity. High-volume success comes from tighter list definition, not wider reach. You can automate this using PhantomBuster's <u>lead insights playbook</u>.
- **2. Automate the repetitive work, but never the judgment:** Use automation for profile collection, sequencing, and timing, but review list quality yourself. The biggest Accelerator risk is slipping into Spinner territory when oversight drops.



- **3.** Use Al for micro-optimizations, not full message generation: Draft your base message manually, then use Al to shorten, sharpen, or adapt variations. This keeps tone credible and avoids pattern-detection issues from generic copy.
- **4. Focus personalization on context, not length:** One line tied to why they're relevant (mutual audience, recent post, shared trigger) is enough. Accelerators win through smart cues, not essays.
- **5. Track where scale starts to break quality:** Monitor acceptance rate dips at higher volumes (e.g., beyond 100–125 requests/week). When the rate drops, adjust targeting, message specificity, or your weekly cap.
- **6. Keep first-touch outreach light and human:** Accelerators perform best when they avoid the "salesy first message" trap. Connection first; value second.



2. The Cruiser Playbook

This playbook suits sellers who prefer depth over speed, and who want fewer, higher-quality conversations that convert more reliably downstream.

Goal: Maximize acceptance rate and quality of replies.

Core KPIs:

- 45-60% acceptance rate
- Weekly volume: 5-25 requests
- Efficiency measured by conversion to booked calls, not volume

Steps:

- **1. Build a "signal library" to personalize at scale:** Identify repeatable triggers, such as job changes, mutual connections, recent posts, notable company events, tech stack updates. Use these signals to create lightweight, high-quality personalization. For example, you can use PhantomBuster to <u>track engagement signals</u>, and sync them with your CRM.
- 2. Treat your profile as your landing page: Cruiser success relies heavily on trust signals: a clear headline, strong About section, sharp positioning, and proof of expertise. This is why they convert above 56%.

3. Use Al for research summarization, not direct copywriting: Al can pull talking points from a prospect's recent activity, but write the message yourself. Authenticity is your differentiator.

4. Use a two-step outreach framework:

Step 1: Simple, contextual connection request with zero pitch.

Step 2: A personalized opener referencing a real signal and one short question.

Cruisers win when they avoid complexity.

5. Accept lower volume in exchange for higher leverage: Cruisers often convert more downstream because early interactions feel more intentional.

6. Track the two real metrics that matter: Think connection acceptances, and booked call conversions. Unlike Accelerators, Cruisers don't measure "accepted/hour." Their success is measured by whether the right people actually respond and convert.



Takeaways

The four archetypes reveal that Linkedln success is defined by how intentionally sellers match their workflow to their goals.

Accelerators prove that high volume can work when targeting stays tight and message quality doesn't slip, achieving strong acceptance rates even at 100+ requests per week.

Cruisers show the opposite side of the spectrum, with low volume but high precision, converting at the highest rates because their outreach feels human.

Spinners and **Drifters** highlight the risks at either extreme. Spinners push volume without enough relevance, cutting their efficiency in half despite equal effort. Drifters lack consistency altogether, limiting visibility and weakening outcomes even with a lighter workload. Together, these patterns show that workflow design makes all the difference (more so than effort).

Teams choosing a model should start with their constraints. They should consider their capacity, pipeline expectations, the strength of their positioning, and how much time they can reliably invest each week. Accelerators benefit teams that need fast pipeline movement, while Cruisers help teams optimize for higher-calibre conversations.

The key is avoiding the pitfalls that pull either model off course, whether that's declining relevance (which can lead to Spinner territory) or declining consistency (which leads straight to the Drifters).

But where are all these archetypes heading in 2026? Next, we looked at the real challenges sellers run into on LinkedIn. We highlight where the biggest opportunities still are, and what teams can lean into to make meaningful progress.

CHAPTER 4

Challenges & Opportunities

As sales teams look to 2026, they face familiar hurdles, such as low response rates and targeting challenges. Yet the outlook is largely optimistic. Most plan to refine their strategy rather than reduce activity, investing in stronger content and more strategic use of Al.



1. Targeting, acceptance rates, and message replies are friction points

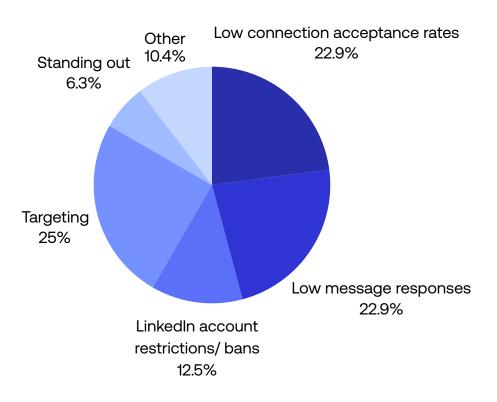
When asked about their top challenge, nearly 70% of sellers point to three issues: finding the right people, getting accepted, and getting replies. These are the core bottlenecks that slow down most Linkedln workflows, regardless of team size.

Account restrictions also affect around 1 in 8 users, showing that platform limits and safety checks are still a meaningful constraint. Interestingly, very few sellers cite "standing out" as their main struggle, suggesting most teams feel blocked by operational hurdles long before they reach creative ones.

PhantomBuster Lens:

These hurdles often come from messy workflows rather than lack of skill. Tightening how you source, sort, and sequence leads usually solves more than it seems.

"What is your top challenge?"





2. How sellers want LinkedIn to evolve

When asked what would significantly improve their prospecting experience on Linkedln, these eight themes came up.

Theme	Description	Example quotes	Share
1. Training & platform mastery	Many respondents felt they lacked full knowledge of LinkedIn's or their tools' capabilities, calling for tutorials or AI training.	"Know better how to use it." "I need to spend more time learning LinkedIn/PhantomBuster features."	~20%
2. Better targeting & filters	Frustration with inaccurate or limited targeting options; desire for finer segmentation by job title, ICP, or client.	"Industry targeting remains too broad." "LinkedIn is limited in its ability to screen ICP."	~17%
3. CRM & system integration	Requests for smoother syncing between LinkedIn and CRMs or sales pipelines (Salesforce, automated tools).	"Integration with CRM." "Be automatically synced with Salesforce without coding."	~14%
4. Messaging/ engagement improvements	Calls for better inbox features, automation, and ways to boost engagement.	"Better messaging interface/features." "More engagement and DMs."	~14%



Theme	Description	Example quotes	Share
5. Differentiation/ personalization	Overcrowding and "noise" on LinkedIn make it hard to stand out and start real conversations.	"There's a lot of noise how to stand out is key." "Generate a conversation — not just a connection."	~14%
6. AI & automation features	Interest in more native AI tools, integration options, and automated workflows.	"Open interface for AI integration." "AI capabilities." "Automatic posts."	~10%
7. Platform functionality (filters, data, interface)	Technical or UX improvements such as better filters, search, and lead uploads.	"More filters." "Lead upload to LinkedIn."	~7%
8. Data quality concerns	Complaints about unreliable or outdated LinkedIn data.	"The data is less reliable than other sources."	~3%



What stands out most in this section is that most people are short on clarity. Many sellers feel they're only using a fraction of what LinkedIn or their tech stack can actually do, which leaves them working harder than they need to. When outreach slows down, it's usually because basic steps like targeting, tracking, or follow-up aren't flowing together cleanly.

CRM issues and data quality come up again and again. As teams layer more systems on top of each other, even simple tasks can become clunky. Manual updates creep back in, information gets lost, and it becomes difficult to tell whether a workflow is making an impact or not. That's where most of the hidden drag seems to be; lurking in the everyday mechanics.

There's also a shift in how people want to use LinkedIn next year. Volume matters less. Precision, context, and better use of the tools they already rely on matter more. A lot of respondents hinted that they'd get better results if the platform (and surrounding tools) helped them work in a clearer, more guided way.

PhantomBuster Lens:

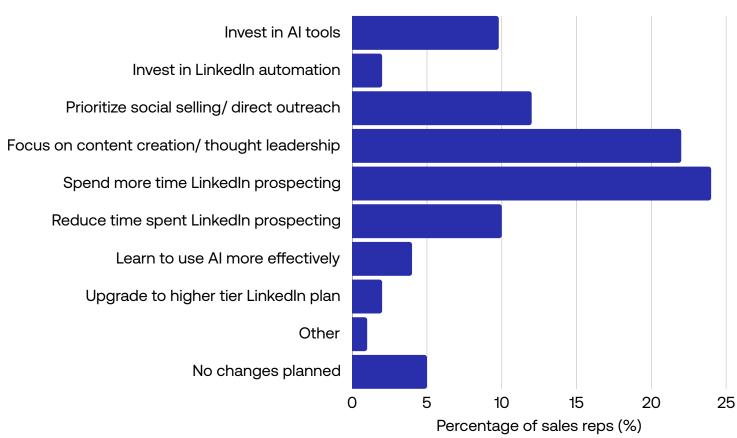
When sellers understand their systems and automate the right steps, they remove the friction that holds most teams back, and the quality of their outreach naturally rises.



4. What teams will focus on in 2026

We asked sellers what they plan to change or invest in for 2026. Here's where their priorities are.







The plans for 2026 suggest a shift toward deeper, more intentional use of Linkedln. Many sellers want to spend more time on the platform. But they're not necessarily focused on direct outreach. Instead, they want to create stronger content, show up more consistently, and build trust in ways automation alone can't achieve. It's more about showing people who you are, and why a conversation is worth having.

Al remains a growing focus, though the interest is split between buying new tools and simply learning how to use what they already have. That tells us people see potential in Al but still feel they're early in the learning curve. At the same time, a small group plan to dial back their time on Linkedln, hinting that some sellers are looking for a healthier balance or exploring other channels to avoid burnout.

Very few plan to upgrade to paid tiers, which suggests most feel they've already chosen the tools they need, and the next gains will come from using those tools more intentionally, rather than stacking more on top.

PhantomBuster Lens:

We see a common thread across these plans. People want clearer systems that help them stay consistent without overwhelming them. When the busywork is lighter and the workflow feels more coherent, sellers have more space to show up with the kind of outreach that actually lands.



Takeaways

What comes through clearly in this chapter is that the hardest parts of LinkedIn selling are the operational tasks. Most sellers know what they want to do, but the day-to-day mechanics get in the way: unclear targeting, patchy integrations, and workflows that never quite click into place.

As teams layer more tools and processes into their stack, small points of friction turn into bigger slowdowns. Manual updates creep back into CRM systems, acceptance rates dip when lists aren't tightened, and follow-up becomes inconsistent when data isn't synced. These gaps explain why performance varies so widely, even among teams using similar tools.

Looking to 2026, people want their work on LinkedIn to feel more intentional. They're planning to invest time in better content, clearer positioning, and outreach that feels more grounded in context rather than driven by volume. All sits alongside this shift. It's viewed as a way to lighten the cognitive load so sellers can focus on the parts of the job that matter.

Content creation and thought leadership stand out as priorities because they help sellers build trust before the first message is ever sent. Showing expertise early gives reps a head start and reduces the pressure on outbound alone.

With these patterns in mind, we can now look at what this all means for the year ahead...

CHAPTER 5

Looking Ahead

In this chapter, we explore the most important takeaways from this report. LinkedIn continues to evolve, and so do the sales teams using it. The future belongs to those who combine data, automation, and human insight to create genuine relationships.



Conclusion

Looking toward 2026, sellers plan to spend more time on Linkedln, invest in thought leadership (22%), and improve how they use the tools they already have.

The goal is to make each interaction clearer and more relevant, and to build trust earlier so conversations start on a stronger footing.

This aligns closely with PhantomBuster's purpose.

We help sales teams turn technology into human connection, so that every message feels real, even when scaled. It's automation, designed with a genuine purpose.

We want to run your repetitive steps smoothly in the background, so that you can focus on the parts of outreach that create real connections, like choosing the right people, understanding where they come from, and showing up authentically.

The teams that can harness data, automation, and human insight will be the ones leading the way on Linkedln in 2026. And PhantomBuster can help you get there.

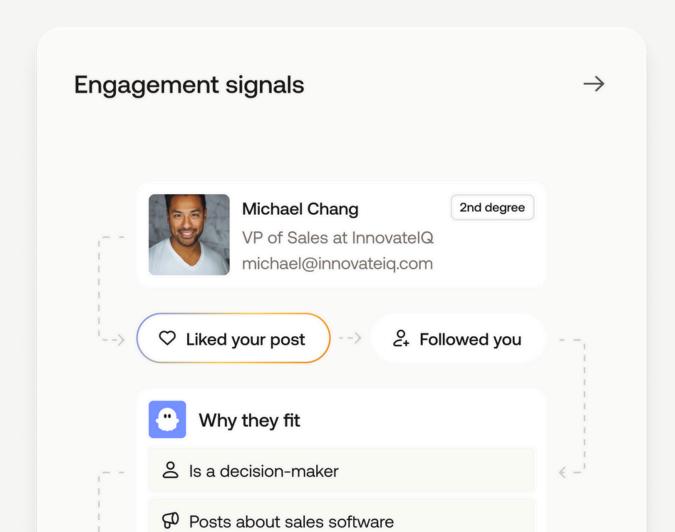
Sincerely, **Guillaume Boiret**CEO, PhantomBuster



This is what PhantomBuster was built for.

Our automation and data tools help you uncover opportunities and grow faster, without losing the human touch that makes Linkedln work.

Try it for free





Appendix: Respondent Demographics

Main Roles

Nearly half of respondents (45%) were founders or business owners, reflecting a strong entrepreneurial presence on Linkedln. Around 36% held frontline sales roles such as SDRs, AEs, or managers, while only 6% were senior sales leaders (VP or Head of Sales). A further 13% listed hybrid or marketing-adjacent roles, showing Linkedln's crossover use beyond traditional sales.

Geographic Distribution

Respondents were largely based in Europe (40%) and North America (32%), together representing 72% of participants. Latin America (16%) emerged as a growing LinkedIn prospecting market, while Asia-Pacific, MENA, and other regions each contributed 4% of responses.

Industries

The sample spanned a wide range of sectors, with financial services and manufacturing leading at 19% each. Technology/SaaS (13.5%) remained a key vertical, reflecting LinkedIn's strength in B2B software sales. Other notable industries included marketing and agencies (9.6%), professional services (5.8%), and healthcare/life sciences (5.8%).

Team Size

A clear majority (81%) worked in small teams of five or fewer, including 38% who operate solo. Only 19% belonged to mid- or large-sized sales teams. This highlights LinkedIn prospecting as a channel dominated by independent sellers and lean teams, with a heavy reliance on automation and efficiency tools.

Typical Deal Size

Most respondents managed mid-range deals, with 36% closing between \$25k-\$100k and another 23% in the \$5k-\$25k range. Around 12% handled higher-value deals above \$100k, while 11% focused on smaller transactions under \$5k. A further 17% reported highly variable deal sizes, suggesting a diverse client mix spanning SMB to enterprise.