

LinkedIn | SCALE

Founder-led Sales And Marketing Never Ends

How to turn your expertise into
trust, demand, and revenue



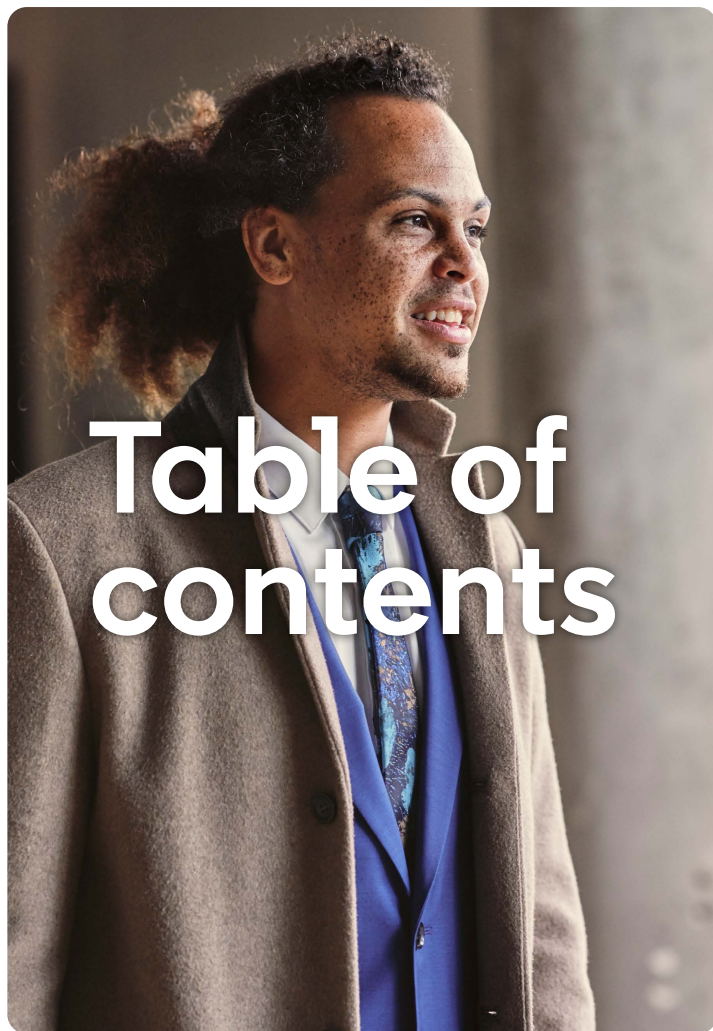


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From post to pipeline

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Your voice is your startup's most valuable asset

You wake up to a LinkedIn notification. A Fortune 500 exec has commented on your post: *"Your video on pricing mistakes saved us \$2M. Can we talk?"*

Your LinkedIn inbox fills with DMs from prospects. Your sales team pings you: *"Three new deals referenced your LinkedIn posts. They already trust us."*

An industry newsletter calls you *"the most influential voice"* in your niche. You're invited to speak at top industry conferences, saving you tens of thousands on sponsorships.

This is the power of founder-led marketing done right.



You've seen it with Chris Walker (Encoded), Melanie Perkins (Canva), Gal Aga (Aligned), Arvind Jain (Glean), and more.

You can do it too. You should do it too.



As Gal Aga, CEO of Aligned, puts it, *"LinkedIn isn't just a social channel. It's an all-in-one growth engine. A year ago, I'd have laughed out loud if you told me 700k people would read what I have to say every week or that LinkedIn would drive 65% of Aligned's leads. I was so wrong."*

A. FROM POST TO PIPELINE 1. Your voice is your startup's most valuable asset

Your brand influences your revenue. As TOPO founder and high-growth startup advisor Scott Albro explains, *“Your brand is the market’s perception of you. Our job is to actively shape that perception in a way that drives revenue.”*

This is the founder’s job, not marketing’s (at first). No marketing team can replicate your deep product knowledge (you built this), your passion for the problem (it keeps you up at night), or your credibility (you’ve earned every scar).

Your founder brand is your pricing power, talent magnet, and deal closer. You’re not chasing “influencer” status. You’re turning your expertise into trust, pipeline, and demand.

Yes, it’s uncomfortable at first.

Posting feels vulnerable. Outreach seems pushy. Like going from the couch to running a 5K, building your brand is grueling initially. You’ll gasp for air (struggle with writing), stumble (create low-impact posts), and question why you even started. But stick with it.

- **MONTH 1** might feel slow and uncertain, perhaps even painful.
- **BY MONTH 3**, prospects reference your content on calls. Competitors start lurking.
- **IN MONTH 6+**, deals close faster. Talent slides into your DMs. You become the category narrative.

The initial discomfort is the barrier to entry that keeps competitors out. You already have everything you need to start—and this playbook helps you get there faster.



As Hootsuite CEO Irina Novoselsky shared in a recent LinkedIn post, *“77% of buyers are more likely to purchase from companies whose leadership team is active on social media. Business has always been about relationships. Social media just happens to be where those relationships are being built today. Short of sitting across the table from our customers, being on social is where I can actually engage with them in real-time. Last quarter alone, my social presence influenced ~\$15M in pipeline. We close deals faster with socially-engaged buyers.”*



What is Founder-led Sales and Marketing?

And how does it change as you grow?

Founder-led sales and marketing is a high-impact go-to-market strategy where the people who created the company become its most powerful growth engine.

Startups can't rely on brand equity or big sales teams. What they have is a story, and the founder is best positioned to tell it with clarity, conviction, and credibility.

Here's why it works:

- 1 Buyers bet on you, not just your product.**
Founders sell the future better than anyone else.
- 2 Pivots happen fast.**
Being close to customers helps you catch shifts early.
- 3 Relationships > resources.**
What you lack in scale, you can make up for with relationships. And that builds trust.

The data backs this up:

33%

LinkedIn research shows that startups whose founders **post at least 10x a year** on LinkedIn generate **33% more leads** than those who don't.*

3.7x

Sendoso shared they saw up to **3.7x higher deal size** when their execs posted regularly or were followed by prospects.*

22%

And Gong's data demonstrates that **deals close 22% faster** when buyers feel they "know you".

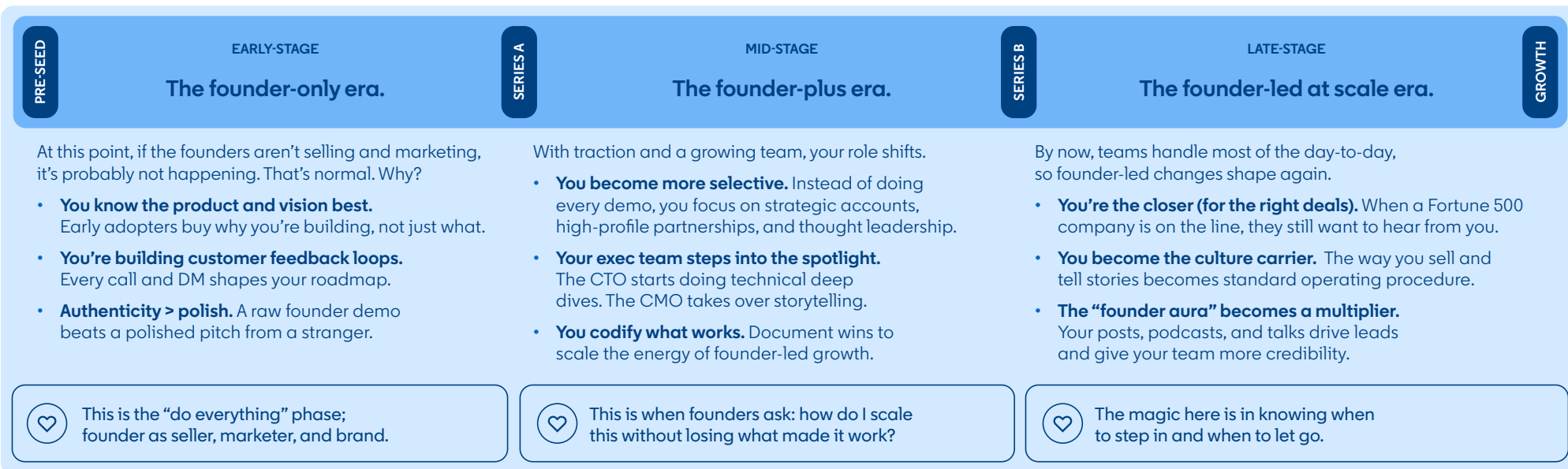
1.7x to 3.4x

Companies like ElevenLabs and Sendoso saw **1.7x to 3.4x higher deal sizes** when their execs posted regularly or were followed by prospects, compared to their non-LinkedIn influenced deals

*Source: LinkedIn Internal Data, June 2025. Date range: May 2024 to May 2025. Includes: Global startups from seed stage to D+ that have between 15 and 1,500 employees and at least one marketing/sales person, that have run lead generation campaigns and their founders/senior exec team have made at least 10 posts in a year.

Founder-led is a growth lever

The way founder-led works shifts dramatically as a startup grows. What makes sense at 10 employees falls apart at 100, and what works at 100 would have been impossible at 10.



The best founder-led strategies are bridges. They start with "just us" and gradually become "all of us," without losing the urgency and authenticity that made them work in the first place.



As Arvind Jain, founder of Glean, shares: "At Glean, thought leadership is a company-wide team effort. Our goal is for everyone at Glean to come together, ensuring our unique perspective as AI subject matter experts reaches the right audience to help them be more successful."

Sendoso

3

Case study: Sendoso

Sendoso's executive thought leadership strategy drives real results and incremental ROI.

Sendoso saw an **11% higher win rate** when a prospect was exposed to a LinkedIn post from a Director+ exec, and **120% higher closed-won deal sizes** when a prospect followed a Director+ exec on LinkedIn.

11%

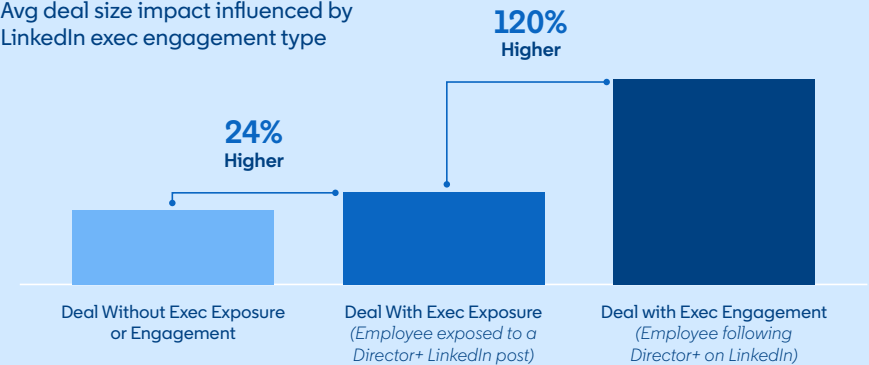
higher win rate

120%

higher closed-won deal sizes

*Source: LinkedIn Internal Data, June 2025. All deals were influenced by LinkedIn. LinkedIn Influenced deals are defined as Closed Won deals with at least 5 paid impressions delivered to the target company within a 6 month period prior to the deal opening. Employees from the target company had to be exposed to an exec's post or following an exec at least 100 days prior to the deal opening.

Avg deal size impact influenced by LinkedIn exec engagement type





From vision to action

Five steps to high impact content

- 1 Lead with perspective, not product
- 2 Turn your daily interactions into content gold
- 3 Pack a punch with each post
- 4 Build systems to stay consistent without burning out
- 5 Measure ROI the right way

Five steps to high impact content

You don't need a perfect strategy; just consistent, intentional effort. Here are five steps to turn your expertise into content that builds trust and drives revenue. (Plus, tips on using AI to think faster and stand out.)



STEP 1:

1

Lead with perspective, not product

Most founder content reads like a brochure: "We help X do Y!"

While it's tempting to go straight for the sale, that's not how people buy, is it? People tend to scroll right past sales pitches. The irony is the less you talk about your product, the more people want to buy it.



Gal Aga, CEO of Aligned, explains: *"First, [people] listen to you, they feel like they're deeply connected, they love the ideas you put out, they trust you, and then they have to check out what you do."*

Every founder has a story to share.

Scott Albro, founder of TOPO, recommends the following 3 story types for startups that build traction and trust:



With your storytelling, remember that true differentiation matters. That comes from your perspective, not your product specs.



Glean's social lead Alison McCarthy (Coleman) shares: *"Arvind leans into his technical expertise and credibility and timely industry news because that's what sets him and Glean apart—and that has to come directly from him."*

How to make your stories more personal while building credibility:

- 1 Earned Impact:**
“From [humble start] to [big win] – the 3 brutal lessons”

- 2 Scar Tissue:**
“The mistake that cost us \$500K. Here’s what we did about it”

- 3 Mistake Avoided:**
“Bootstrapped to \$ARR with X number of staff. Here’s why hiring more people would’ve killed us”

- 4 Social Proof:**
“Why [big name] trusts me to fix [niche problem]”

- 5 Contrarian Hook:**
“Why [common advice] is terrible for [certain audience], and what to do instead”

These build credibility because they show you’ve lived the pain and overcome it. They set you apart by revealing how you think, what you believe, and the hard-won lessons that shaped you. That’s what creates emotional resonance, the kind that makes people want to know more about what you do.

Kacie Jenkins, former SVP of Marketing at Sendoso, helped her executives get started by encouraging them to post 2x a week for a quarter. The point wasn’t to go viral, but to connect with their audience.



Kacie Jenkins, former SVP of Marketing at Sendoso, says, *“It’s not about you, it’s how you can help other people. How do we make other people feel less alone? Feel understood? Feel part of something?”*



To sum up: People don’t care about your product; they care about your unique perspective on *their* problems. Lead with perspective, not product.

Use AI to help you reflect

Here are two ways to use AI to help you uncover the stories only you can tell.



1

Start with what you've already done.

Feed AI your resume or LinkedIn post history and ask:

- *"Which 2-3 experiences would be most relevant to [my target audience]?"*
- *"What themes or stories from my prior posts seem to resonate most?"*

This helps surface credibility markers and experiences that build trust.

2

Talk it out.

If writing feels hard, don't start with writing. Record a voice memo or jot down a brain dump of thoughts, ideas, or recent conversations. Then ask AI:

- *"What are a few storylines in here that would resonate with [my audience]?"*
- *"What's the emotional core of what I'm trying to say?"*

Use AI to spot the signal in the noise. The story is still yours. This just helps you find it faster.



STEP 2:

2

Turn your daily interactions into content gold



Your calendar is a content buffet. Every meeting, DM, and “aha” moment is a story waiting to be told. Train yourself (and your team) to spot these stories.



Alec Paul, founder of SalesBrand, advises founders to: *“treat your life like content. Be more like a journalist. You’re talking to customers every day. You’re the most connected to the pains that you’re solving. No one should know this stuff more than you. It’s about figuring out how to put your antenna up to see the things that are happening around you in your day...like, oh, that was the content. Oh, that was the hook. Oh, that’s the message.”*

In the early stages, your proximity to customers is your superpower. In the growth stages, empower your team to surface insights and feed them into your content engine.

Start by getting clear on your audience:

- 1 What do they care about?
- 2 What problems keep them up at night?
- 3 What goals are they chasing?



Glean's Social Lead Alison McCarthy (Coleman) shares how she approaches this: *"To bring our strategy to life, we bring in voices from across the company - sales, customer success and product. We leverage our pulse on what we're hearing from customers, what we're reading on LinkedIn, and in the news. We aim to have a balanced mix of posts that are proactive and responding to market dynamics and conversations."*

Once you know that, here's how to turn your day-to-day into high-value content:

1 Op-eds:

Personal takes with a strong point of view. Much like real op-eds, they provoke thought and spark conversation. After each call, ask yourself:

- What surprised me? → *Contrarian take*
- What bothered me? → *Polarizing hook*
- What lesson would save others pain? → *High-resonance post*

2 Behind-the-scenes features:

Reveal the "story behind the story," much like a journalist uncovering the "why" behind a major decision:

E.g., "We almost didn't launch [feature] because [reason]. Here's the data that changed our minds."

3 First-person essays:

Reflective human essays, mirroring the personal essays you'd find in publications like The Atlantic or The New Yorker.

E.g., "I promoted the wrong person. Here's what happened and how we recovered."

4 Customer interviews:

Quote from real customer calls and surface customers' objections or insights.

E.g., "A common worry buyers have about [solution] (and how to address it)." Or, turn a quote into a hook, e.g., "'Your product is too expensive.' What they really meant was..."

5 Human-interest features:

Show how your product fits into real lives.

E.g., Turn demo insights into 'Day in the Life' type posts, showing how customers are using your product. This adds social proof.

AI can help you surface the stories hiding in your day-to-day.



Use AI to help via prompts such as:

- *“What are three angles I could take on this customer insight?”*
- *“Help me outline a post based on this quote: “Your product is too expensive.”*
- *“What’s a strong hook for a post about a decision we almost didn’t make?”*
- *“Suggest a structure for a founder story about a mistake and what we learned.”*
- *“What’s a contrarian take on this trend that might spark conversation?”*
- *“Summarize this transcript into key themes I could turn into content.”*

To sum up: Think of your calendar like an editorial newsroom: you’re publishing a mix of op-eds, features, and field reports from the front lines of your business.



STEP 3:

3

Pack a punch with each post

Now that you're spotting stories, let's make sure they land.

Let's dive behind-the-scenes into the different elements and approaches that work best on LinkedIn.

✓ Pay extra attention to your hook

Your hook is your headline, your scroll-stopper, your first impression. If it doesn't make someone pause, the rest doesn't matter.

Gal Aga, CEO and founder of Aligned, rewrites posts that don't get traction in the first 15–30 minutes—his benchmark is 1-2 likes per minute. That's not vanity. That's signal.

Most people post what's obvious.

Obvious is forgettable, specific is magnetic. Posts that spread are the ones that make people stop and say, "Yes. *This.*"

✓ How long is too long?

Short posts can work. So can long ones. What matters is depth.

LinkedIn data shows that posts between 400–800 words generate nearly **2.7x more engagement*** than those under 50 words. The key question is, *“would this help someone outside my company solve a real problem?”*



As Gal Aga attests: *“I hit the character limit on most posts. Short ‘influencer style’ ideas are nice. But for me, the real impact comes from giving people deep advice. Something they can present at a sales kick-off, a playbook, a strategy, a research breakdown, etc.”*

Don’t be afraid to go deep. If it feels overwhelming, work with a coach or marketing partner to shape your ideas.

*Source: LinkedIn Internal Data, June 2025. Date range: May 2024 to May 2025. Includes: Director+ members from global startups from seed stage to D+ that have between 15 and 1,500 employees and at least one marketing/sales. Includes posts that have received at least 20 impressions and 3 engagements, excludes posts about new roles, starting a new education, company anniversaries etc.

✓ Handle the heat

Having an edge means you’ll get pushback. That’s a feature, not a bug. Troll comments are algorithm fuel. **Gal Aga**, CEO and founder of Aligned, replies to every single one with either gratitude or a question that invites dialogue.

If it’s your ICP pushing back, even better. That’s a conversation worth having. Consider replying with comments like *“Appreciate the pushback! Curious, what’s your take on [specific point]?”*

Scott Albro, founder of TOPO, puts it best: *“A hate comment from your ICP is worth 100 ‘Great post!’ replies.”*

✓ Find your “Prolific Zone”

Alec Paul calls this the narrow band between “obvious” and “crazy”, where your content is authentic, polarizing, and painfully relevant.

How to get there:

- **Challenge conventional wisdom:** *“Always be closing is dead. Here’s how we 3X’d revenue by downsizing our SDR team.”*
- **Share taboo truths:** *“Why we let 80% of customers churn...on purpose.”*
- **Track the hate:** If *“<10% of comments are negative, you’re playing it too safe. If >30%, you’ve gone too far. Somewhere in the middle? You’re onto something.”*

Early-stage founders can afford to be scrappier and bolder. Later-stage leaders may want to balance edge with business brand alignment.

✓ Work with the algorithm

Drive the engagement you want to see by putting the “social” back in social media. LinkedIn isn’t a one-way broadcast platform.

- **Tag** people thoughtfully.
- **Ask** meaningful questions to boost engagement.
- **Reply** to and like comments, especially in the first few hours.
- **Post 3x a week**, ideally between 8–10am in your audience’s time zone.
- **Avoid reposting others’ content** without adding your own take.
- Use your own words, visuals, and frameworks, even if they’re imperfect.
- **Provide value** on LinkedIn itself rather than just directing members to external resources.

Why you should show up on video

Video is the fastest-growing language of trust in B2B, and for founders, it's the most powerful way to scale credibility.

Rand Fishkin, co-founder and CEO of SparkToro and Snackbar Studios, was an early adopter of video in B2B. *"When I first started experimenting with video as a B2B content format back in 2007, I noticed a strange thing: the number of viewers was far lower than our usual blog readers, but the level of engagement, memory, and brand association was WAY higher,"* he shares. *"People who'd seen my videos built a powerful brand association between me, our company, and the problems we solved."*

That brand association translated into real-world impact: invitations to speak, referrals, and citations. His advice? **Don't just post videos; build a series to maximize brand association and trust.**

When it comes to platform choice, Rand is clear: *"LinkedIn gives me by FAR the most reach and engagement of any social platform these days."*



When asked about how he finds the time to create videos, Rand shares: *"I don't have time for intensive video creation. Thankfully, folks are very happy to watch and engage with non-studio-quality video content these days. My full video creation process is incredibly easy, and takes me less time than writing a blog post—as little as 10 minutes to film, upload, and publish a 2–5 minute piece."*

His advice: don't overthink it. If it resonates, it spreads. He added, *"If a video resonates with my audience, it can easily earn 25–50K+ views in 48 hours."*

LinkedIn data backs that up:

36%

Video creation on LinkedIn is growing 2x faster than any other format, with viewership up **36% year-over-year.**

63%

63% of B2B buyers say video content helps inform their buying decisions.

98%

98% of Fortune 500 CEOs who use social media choose LinkedIn as their primary platform.

1.6x

Video ads combined with Lead Gen Forms drive **1.6x higher open rates.**



Posts with video are more likely to be shared, remembered, and acted on.

*Source: LinkedIn Internal Data June 2025

Here's how you can make video work:



Start with a story.

What's a recent customer insight, mistake, or "aha" moment you can share?



Make it useful.

Teach something. Challenge a belief. Spark a conversation.



Keep it real.

Speak like you would to a peer. No scripts, no jargon.



Show your face.

Looking at the camera increases engagement by 34%.

Use the punch test

Before you hit publish, make sure your post has each of the following elements:

- ☐ **Emotion:** Does this make someone feel something?
- ☐ **Insight:** Does this make someone think differently?
- ☐ **Action:** Does this make someone want to respond or share?

If the answer is yes to at least two, you're good to go.

Refer to the Checklist at the end of this document for a summary of all best practices.



To sum up: Every post is a chance to earn trust, spark a conversation, or shift someone's thinking. So work with the algorithm to help maximize its impact.

Use AI to help you pack a punch

Got a rough idea or a messy draft? Ask AI:



To clarify structure:

1

- “What’s the clearest way to structure this story for a LinkedIn post?”
- “What’s the emotional core of this message?”

To find a stronger hook:

2

- “What’s a bold or surprising or emotionally resonant way to open this story?”
- “What would make [audience type] feel this is most relevant for them?”

To close with impact:

3

- “What’s a takeaway that would make this post feel complete and memorable?”
- “How could I end this in a way that invites conversation?”

AI won’t replace your voice,
but it can help you sharpen it faster.

STEP 4:

4

Build systems to stay consistent without burning out



Even the best content won't land if you can't keep showing up. That's where systems come in.

Every minute spent posting is a minute you're not building, hiring, selling, or putting out fires. Taking time away to post on social media can feel scary, like taking your hands off the wheel while driving at 100 miles an hour.

This is the main reason why many founders start strong, only to ghost their audience later.

But trust is built over time. A high-impact founder brand takes months to grow. This is a marathon, not a sprint.

Startup Directors+ who post at least 9 times a year see **3x more engagement** and **4x more new followers** than those who post only once.

Don't wait for inspiration. Operationalize creativity by building systems that compound over time. In the early days, your system might be a voice memo and a Google Doc. As you scale, build a shared content bank your team can contribute to and draw from.

Here's how to build systems, not just posts:

✓ Create repeatable rhythms

Build time in your schedule each week to batch create content. For example, Gal Aga blocks off time on Sundays to create 3 posts for the upcoming week, typically following this formula:

1 scar story
e.g., "We lost \$500K because..."



1 contrarian take
e.g., "Why [industry belief] is wrong"



1 customer insight
e.g., "What 17 buyers told me about..."

✓ Record ideas as voice memos

We talk faster than we can type. Make it easier on yourself by recording voice memos post-call. Or even while walking the dog.

TIP: Use AI to transcribe them into posts, saving you ~80% of the writing time!



✓ Crowd source ideas

Surveys, polls, and audience research are goldmines.



For example, Peep Laja, CEO of Wynter, shares: "I produce original research around B2B brand marketing, messaging, buyer behavior, and so on. The results and insights give me unique material for content that nobody else has. I run these survey-based research studies usually 1-2 times per month, and each survey gives me at least a week's worth of content."

✓ Have your marketing team record you

Try asking someone on your marketing team to record an "interview" with you to come up with several video clips or sound bites that can be turned into text posts. Or share stream-of-consciousness thoughts and let them shape the first draft.



Kacie Jenkins, former SVP of Marketing at Sendoso, explains: "It's important to work with your exec team and subject matter experts to identify how they best think and reflect, and then build on that. Everyone works and thinks differently, and this process is most impactful when it's complementary."

✓ Build a content “bank”

Create a central doc with:

- ICP profiles: pain points, objections, goals.
- Post ingredients: scar stories, customer insights, stats, day-in-the-life moments.
- Hook library: ready-to-use openers.
- What’s worked: reuse top comments, repurpose formats.

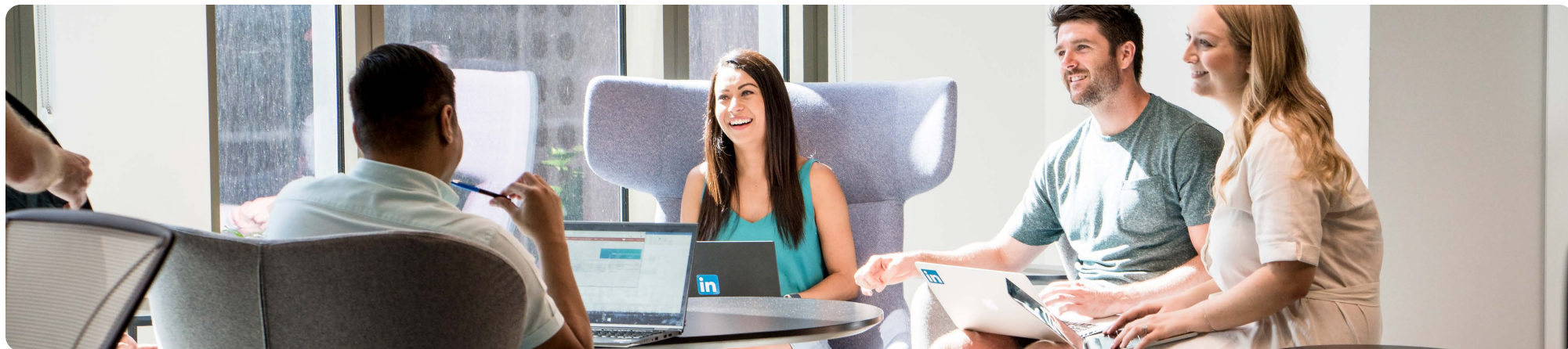
TIP: Share this document with your marketing team so they can add to it and keep it fresh.



✓ Plan for creative blocks

Even with systems, you’ll get stuck. Keep a “what to post when I’m stuck” list:

- “What’s something I wish I knew 6 months ago?”
- “What’s a mistake I made this week?”
- “What’s a customer question I keep hearing?”
- “What’s a belief I’ve changed my mind about?”
- “What’s an intelligent risk or decision I made that paid off?”
- “What most energized me this week?”
- “What’s a trend I can help my audience understand?”
- “What’s my quick take on recent, relevant industry news?”



Use AI to stay in motion:

When things get busy, AI can help you stay consistent without burning out.



1 Turn voice notes into drafts

After a call, record a quick memo. Then ask:

- “Summarize this into 2–3 post ideas.”
- “What’s the most compelling insight here?”
- “What’s a takeaway someone else could learn from this?”

2 Build your content bank faster

Feed AI your past posts or notes and ask:

- “What themes do I keep coming back to?”
- “Which ideas could become a series?”
- “What could become a framework or principle?”

3 Prioritize when you’re underwater

Short on time? Ask:

- “Which of these 5 ideas is most likely to resonate this week?”
- “What feels especially timely right now?”

**You’re still in control.
AI just helps you move
faster, with less friction.**



Glean’s Arvind Jain shares his approach:

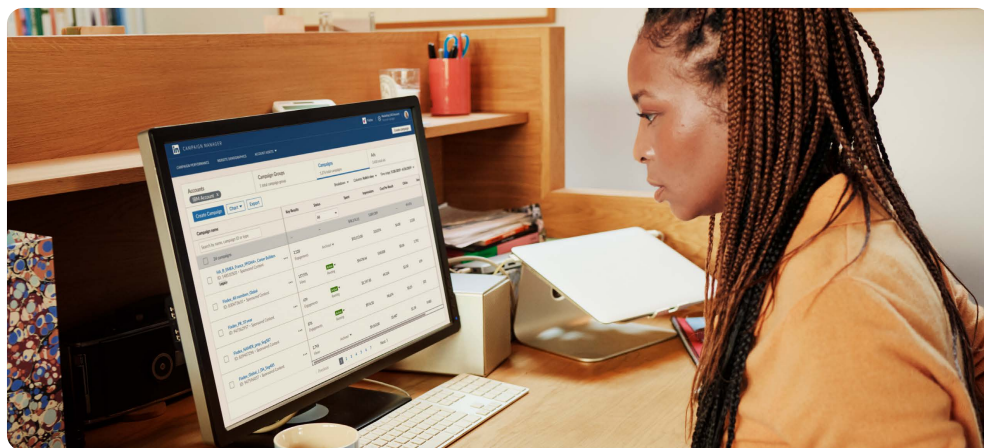
“As an AI-first company, I encouraged our team to take an AI-first approach to our content strategy. To capture my voice accurately, our marketing team built a Glean agent trained on transcripts from my past speaking engagements. Now, every draft runs through the agent for tone and polish before it is shared.”

To sum up: Stop waiting for inspiration and build systems that generate it. You can reduce friction and save time by aligning content creation with your existing work.

STEP 5:

5

Measure ROI the right way



Once you've built a rhythm, the next question becomes: is it working?

As you might imagine, founder-led marketing is challenging to measure.

The metrics that matter most—trust, resonance, reputation—don't show up in your dashboard. They show up in your deal velocity, your DMs, and the way people talk about you when you're not in the room.

Here's how to go about measuring influence, resonance and momentum



1 FIRST 90 DAYS: Track leading indicators →

Validate whether your content is resonating before it drives pipeline via:

- ✓ **Engagement quality**
Comments from ICPs, DMs received, reposts by peers.
- ✓ **Audience growth**
Follower count (especially from target segments).
- ✓ **Conversation starters**
Number of inbound messages or replies sparked by content.
- ✓ **Confidence score**
Self-rated ease and comfort with posting (weekly check-in).

✗ What not to do:

- Obsess over engagement metrics
- Delete underperforming posts (they're valuable learning moments)
- Compare yourself to established thought leaders

These habits will only drain your motivation, and your systems won't yet be strong enough to carry you through the dip.

2 THE NEXT 90 DAYS: Track momentum →

Track the following metrics to understand how your content is influencing your relationships and reputation:

- ✓ **Prospect mentions during sales calls**
(e.g., "saw your post on LinkedIn")

TIP: Train your sales teams to track mentions of your content. ❤️

- ✓ **Dark social mentions**
Mentions of your content being shared in private peer networks (e.g., *Slack groups, email threads, WhatsApp texts*).

Here's how Scott Albro does it in Salesforce:

- Create a "content-influenced" deal stage
- Tag every prospect who mentions your posts, comments or competitors' reactions to you
- Measure deal velocity and pipeline
- Content-assisted conversations: DMs or emails that reference your content
- Podcast or event invites: Inbound requests to speak or collaborate
- Competitor behavior: Similar posts made by competitors
- Newsletter signups/resource downloads (if gated content is part of your strategy)

TIP: Build ways to track these in your CRM. ❤️



TIP:

New LinkedIn post metrics to track

POST-SPECIFIC METRICS

LinkedIn has recently expanded its analytics for individual members and creators, giving you more visibility into how your content performs and who it's reaching. These metrics are available under the "Analytics" tab under your post and can help validate early traction:



Impressions: How often your content appears in feeds.



Video views: Number of views (2+ seconds) on your video content.



Time viewed: Total watch time for your videos.



Engagements: Reactions, comments, shares, and clicks.



Click-throughs: How often people click on your profile, company, or links.



Engagement rate: Interactions as a percentage of impressions.



Audience demographics: Breakdown of who's engaging with your content by job title, industry, location, and more.



Profile views from a post: Number of people who clicked on your profile after viewing your posts. This can be a signal of interest and potential intent.



Followers gained from a post: Number of people who followed your profile after viewing your post. This can help you track which content is growing your audience to help you double down on what's working.



Premium button clicks: If you have a custom CTA ("call to action") on your profile, (e.g., "Visit My Website"), you can track how often it's clicked from your content.

PROFILE METRICS

In addition to your post-specific metrics, these metrics are available for your entire profile:



Total impressions
(across all posts)



Total engagements



Audience demographics
(job title, industry, location, etc.)



Follower growth over time



Top performing posts



Video performance summary
(views, time watched, engagement)

Both sets of metrics help you move beyond vanity metrics to start measuring resonance

(i.e., what's landing, with whom, and why).



3

6 MONTHS ONWARDS:

Business Impact Metrics

Track your lagging indicators. These can take time, but they're the true prizes:



Increasing inbound pipeline

You are generating inbounds with your content or personal brand.

Gal Aga's rule is "if 20%+ of your pipeline mentions your content, you've won".



Increasing deal velocity

Deals with content-influenced leads are closing faster due to pre-established trust.



Attracting talent

Job applicants are citing your posts.



Owning your category

You are increasingly referenced in industry conversations.

MINI CASE STUDY

Hootsuite



Irina Novoselsky, CEO of Hootsuite: "I just did the math on my daily LinkedIn commitment over the last 3 months—10M+ impressions generated. But most importantly, 37% of our monthly leads are influenced by my social presence."

Irina's team saw measurable business impact:

- Executive presence was **mentioned more frequently** in sales calls in Q1 2025 than in all of 2024 (Gong data)
- **Deals closed faster** when buyers referenced her content
- Enterprise opportunities influenced by her social presence had **higher deal size**

Her takeaway: "Authentic executive presence creates compound effects."

This reinforces a key theme: Executive visibility is a competitive edge.

Sendoso's former SVP of Marketing Kacie Jenkins shares how this played out in practice for them: "When someone at a target account is following a leader at Sendoso, we see 11% higher win rates and 120% larger deals. In the last month, I've driven six figures of qualified pipeline through my DMs."

Peep Laja, CEO of Wynter, shares: "My main measurement is self-reported attribution: what percentage of people signing up for Wynter or scheduling a demo say that they found me on LinkedIn. It's about 80%."



Use AI to Spot What's Working

AI can help you make sense of the signals you collect. Here's how to use it to measure what's landing and where to double down:



Analyze your top-performing posts.

1

Feed AI a few posts that got strong engagement and ask:

- "What themes or patterns do you notice across these?"
- "What tone, structure, or format seems to be working best?"
- "What's the common thread that might be resonating with my audience?"

Review your comments and DMs.

2

Copy in a batch of replies or messages and ask:

- "What questions or objections are coming up most often?"
- "What's the sentiment or tone of these responses?"
- "What are people asking for more of?"

Track momentum over time.

3

If you've been posting consistently, ask AI to help you reflect:

- "Based on these posts and responses, how has my content evolved?"
- "What's changed in how people are engaging with me?"
- "What's one area I could lean into more next month?"



Amplify your voice

Accelerate your marketing-sourced pipeline

- 1 Thought Leader Ads
- 2 LinkedIn's Conversions API (CAPI)

Accelerate your marketing-sourced pipeline

1

Thought Leader Ads

Once you've built organic momentum, the next step is to amplify what's already working. Startups that layer paid promotion on top of high-performing organic content grow faster and more efficiently.

Why? Because paid works better when it's built on trust. When your audience already knows and values your voice, amplification feels like a continuation of the conversation, not an ad.

Founder-led marketing gives your team a head start. LinkedIn data shows that startups whose Directors+ post actively generate **33% more leads** through paid campaigns.

It also shortens the testing cycle. Instead of guessing, you double down on what's already resonating with your ICP.

That's where Thought Leader Ads (TLAs) come in.

TLAs let you promote posts from individuals—founders, employees, even customers—rather than just your company page. They look and feel like organic posts: authentic, human, and scroll-stopping.

*Source: LinkedIn Internal Data, June 2025. Date range: May 2024 to June 2025. Includes: Director+ members from global startups from seed stage to D+ that have between 15 and 1,500 employees and at least one marketing/sales person that have run thought leader ad campaigns. Includes ads that have generated at least 100 impressions.

The results speak for themselves:

1.5x
higher CTR

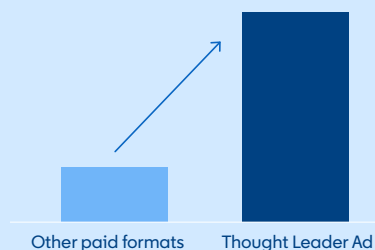
2x
follower growth

30%
more efficient CPCs

45%
more demo requests from retargeting audiences

For startups, the impact is even bigger:

***Source:** LinkedIn Internal Data, June 2025. Date range: May 2024 to June 2025. Includes: Director+ members from global startups from seed stage to D+ that have between 15 and 1,500 employees and at least one marketing/sales person that have run thought leader ad campaigns. Includes ads that have generated at least 100 impressions.



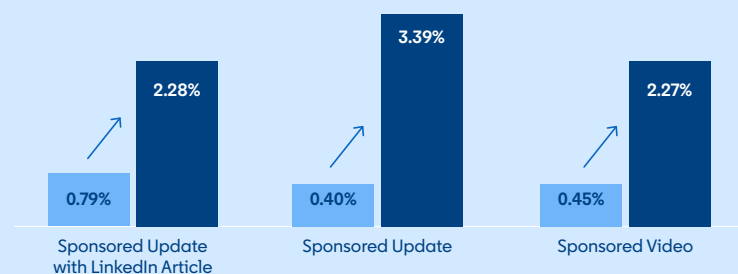
7.6x more engagement

TLAs drive **7.6x more engagement** than any other paid format.

For startups, Thought Leader Ads drive higher engagement than any other paid format on the platform.

Median Engagement Rate

● Non-TLA Engagement Rate ● TLA Engagement Rate



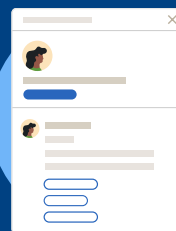
5x more engagement

When paired with video, the results are even stronger: sponsored video on TLAs sees **5x the engagement** of regular sponsored video ads.

***Source:** LinkedIn Internal Data, June 2025. Date range: May 2024 to June 2025. Includes: Ads from global startups from seed stage to D+ that have between 15 and 1,500 employees and at least one marketing/sales person that have run lead generation campaigns. Includes ads that have generated at least 100 impressions, and only includes and compares ads run for Brand Awareness and Engagement campaigns (the only two formats currently supported by TLA)

Make TLAs Part of a Full-Funnel Strategy

The most effective teams retarget TLA engagers using:



Conversation Ads

Interactive, message-based ads that feel like a chat.



Lead Gen Forms

Pre-filled forms that capture contact.



Use **first-party data, target account lists, or website actions** to refine targeting and maximize impact.

The foundation? Your best organic posts. From there, your marketing team can plug them into a full-funnel paid strategy.

Accelerate your marketing-sourced pipeline

2

LinkedIn's Conversions API (CAPI)

Don't forget measurement.

LinkedIn's Conversions API (CAPI) connects your website and CRM data directly to LinkedIn, giving you visibility into offline actions and helping you attribute pipeline and revenue.

Want to go deeper? LinkedIn's revenue attribution tools let you measure impact at the business, campaign, and company level. That way, you can align marketing and sales, prove ROI, and optimize for what matters most: pipeline growth and closed deals.

One tech company using Revenue Attribution Report found:

37% shorter deal
cycles

36% higher win
rates

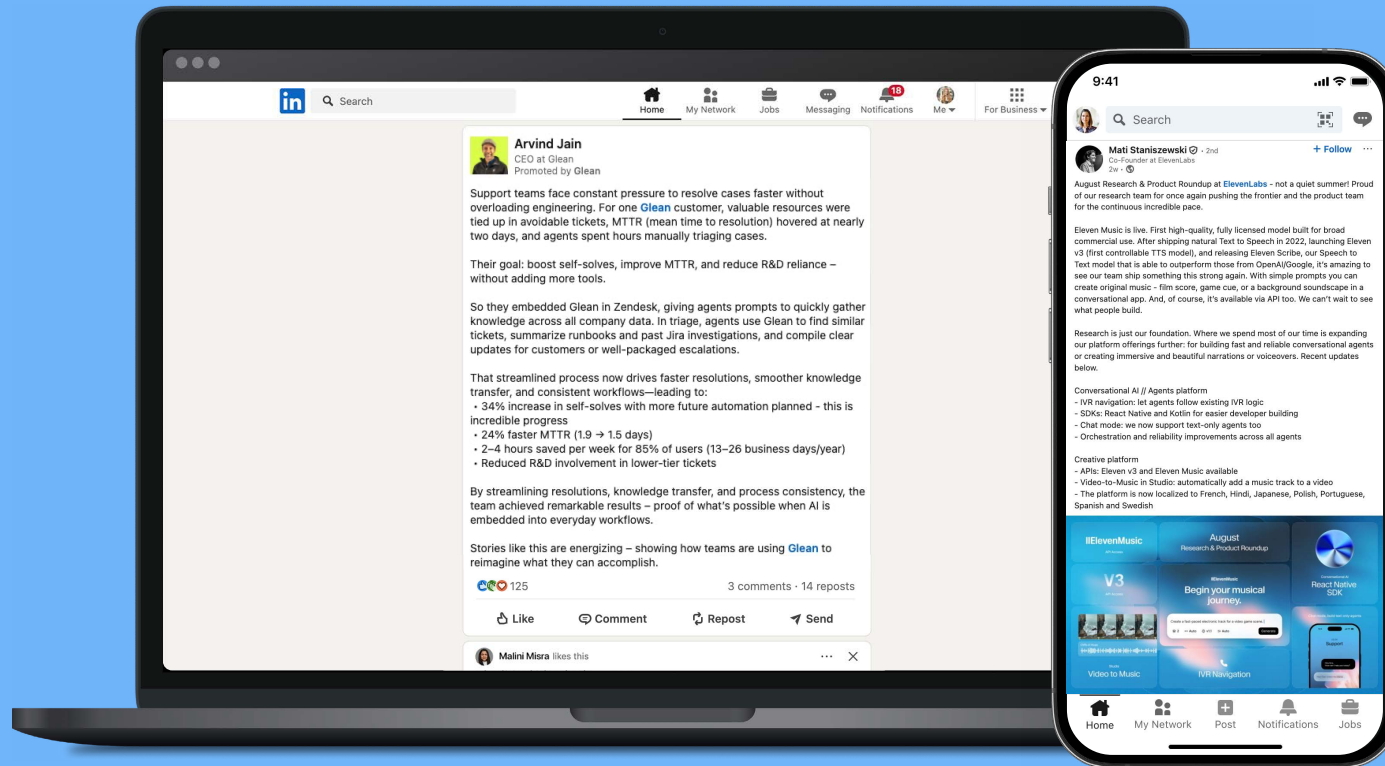


Startup advisor Canberk Beker sums it up: *"When founders connect their organic presence to paid strategy—and measure both direct and influenced pipeline—they see outsized ROI. We've proven that TLAs lift demo requests and drive cross-channel conversions."*

The takeaway: Paid amplification isn't just for awareness. When done right, it accelerates pipeline, improves efficiency, and drives measurable business outcomes.

*Source: LinkedIn Customer Case Study, Rivery <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/case-studies/rivery>

Top-performing founder posts



Your time is now

- 1 TL;DR: The founder-led growth cheat sheet
- 2 High-impact content checklist for founders
- 3 Crawl-walk-run checklist

D. YOUR TIME IS NOW



You're sitting on the most underleveraged asset in your company's arsenal: your voice.

Not your product. Not your funding. Not even your team. It's *your* perspective. *Your* scars. *Your* willingness to say what others won't.

The market doesn't need another polished corporate account. It needs real humans solving real problems. *That's you.* Every founder has a story. The ones who tell it well build companies, and even movements.

Trust is the ultimate currency. It outweighs features. It outlasts pricing. And yes, it takes time to build. But breakthroughs happen in the moments most people quit. Founder-led marketing is a test of stamina, not just strategy. And when time is tight, AI can help.

Every success story has a Day One. Kacie started with zero followers. Gal's first posts flopped.

Scott's early content made him cringe. Day One might suck. But do it anyway. Three months of discomfort can earn you a decade of authority.

You'll turn your expertise into trust, pipeline, and demand. And yes, it's uncomfortable at first. You've already done the hard part getting your startup off the ground. Now it's time to make sure the world sees it.

No matter your stage, whether you're pre-seed and scrappy or scaling with a team, showing up with clarity and conviction is what sets you apart.

Be the founder they can't ignore.

1

The Playbook in a Nutshell

TL;DR: The founder-led growth cheat sheet

You didn't build your startup to be like everyone else. You built it because you saw something others didn't. That perspective is your most underleveraged growth lever.

Founder-led sales and marketing isn't "doing social" or becoming an "influencer". Your mission here is to drive tangible revenue impact by showing up with clarity, conviction, and stories that build trust faster than any pitch.

Here's what actually moves the needle:

Your voice drives revenue

- 77% of buyers are more likely to purchase from companies whose leadership team is active on social.
- Founders who post consistently on LinkedIn generate **33% more leads**. Deals close **22% faster** when buyers feel they "know you."
- **Authenticity > polish**. Your scars, your passion, your product obsession are what build trust.

Content that converts solves problems, not just sells products

- The best posts tackle customer pain, share hard-won lessons, and show transformational shifts.
- Video builds trust fast. 63% of B2B buyers say video content helps inform their decisions.

Systems beat inspiration

- Gal Aga's weekly rhythm: one scar story, one contrarian take, one customer insight.
- Use AI to turn voice memos into posts, which can save you ~80% of writing time.
- Track what matters: pipeline influenced, deal velocity, and "dark social" mentions.

Scale without losing the founder magic

- **Early-stage:** You're the seller, marketer, and brand.
- **Growth-stage:** Your exec team steps up. You codify what works.
- **Late-stage:** You're the closer for big deals—and the culture carrier.

Put this into practice

We've distilled the playbook into two quick-reference guides:

- **Walk-Crawl-Run Framework:**
Stage-by-stage guide to founder-led growth.
- **High-Impact Content Checklist:**
Proven formulas to make every post count.

Bookmark them. Screenshot them. Use them when the calendar's packed and the ideas aren't flowing. Because your voice is your startup's most valuable asset.

2

High-impact content checklist for founders

Use this checklist to ensure your LinkedIn content consistently hits the mark. These tips are inspired by LinkedIn's best practices for high-quality content.

Make it original—your voice is the value

- ☐ Share personal experiences, lessons learned, or behind-the-scenes decisions.
- ☐ Avoid reposting others' content without adding your own take.
- ☐ Use your own words, visuals, and frameworks—even if imperfect.

Make it native to LinkedIn

- ☐ Deliver value directly in the post—not just link out.
- ☐ Summarize key points from a blog post.
- ☐ Use carousels, videos, or polls to engage natively.

Go deep, not just wide

- ☐ Explain the 'why' and 'how' behind your insights.
- ☐ Share actionable advice, not just opinions.
- ☐ Add context that makes the post valuable beyond your immediate network.

Avoid the pitch—teach instead

- ☐ Share what you've learned building your product.
- ☐ Talk about the problem it solves, not just the features.
- ☐ Let your audience connect the dots.

Stay professionally relevant

- ☐ Focus on industry insights, product decisions, leadership lessons, hiring, customer learnings.
- ☐ Share personal stories that tie back to work, growth, or economic opportunity.

Think in conversations, not just posts

- ☐ Ask thoughtful questions.
- ☐ Respond to comments.
- ☐ Treat the comments section as an extension of the post.

3

Crawl-walk-run checklist

Crawl

- ☐ Post 2-3x/week on LinkedIn.
- ☐ Share founder journey stories (e.g., *early mistakes, lessons learned*).
- ☐ Use voice memos or quick notes to capture content ideas.
- ☐ Focus on authenticity over polish.
- ☐ Track confidence and comfort with posting.
- ☐ Start building a content bank with hooks, scar stories, and customer insights.

Walk

- ☐ Establish a repeatable content rhythm (e.g., *Sunday batch writing*).
- ☐ Expand your content bank with ICP insights, objections, and goals.
- ☐ Start tagging your ICP and replying to comments to build engagement.
- ☐ Track mentions in sales calls, DMs, and dark social channels.
- ☐ Begin documenting what content resonates and why.
- ☐ Collaborate with your marketing team to draft or repurpose posts.
- ☐ Experiment with video.

Run

- ☐ Scale content creation with team support and AI-assisted workflows.
- ☐ Layer in paid amplification for high-performing posts (e.g., *Leader Ads*).
- ☐ Retarget TLA engagers with Conversation Ads and Lead Gen Forms.
- ☐ Track content-influenced pipeline and deal velocity.
- ☐ Use CRM tagging to measure dark social- and content-assisted deals.
- ☐ Leverage CAPI and revenue attribution tools to prove ROI.
- ☐ Speak at events, join podcasts, and build your category narrative.

We'd love to
amplify your
success story!



Email us at lm4s@linkedin.com with how this playbook has helped you.

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