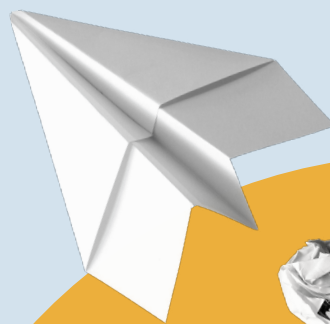


# Founder-led sales and marketing never ends

Why your voice is  
your startup's most  
valuable asset



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# Featuring



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Founder, SalesBrand

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**Irina Novoselsky**

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**Arvind Jain**

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**Kacie Jenkins**

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**Rand Fishkin**

Co-Founder and CEO,  
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**Scott Albro**

Founder, TOPO

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**Gal Aga**

CEO, Aligned

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# Building a team and product is hard enough

Surely someone else can handle earning the market's attention, right? Why would you, the founder, also have to lead sales and marketing? And the answer is that founders actually don't have all that many levers for winning new customers.

As a startup, you're lower on the consideration list. Competitors have larger sales teams, and you can't rely on existing customer relationships. But if you go and talk about your customers' problems in public, that's a lever—and perhaps the most important one of all.

Founder-led growth isn't easy, but it is reliably effective. Compared to a traditional media push, you can sometimes reach 100x the audience by posting your ideas to LinkedIn. Your buyers are already there having relevant conversations. You don't have to fight editorial gatekeepers, it aids in recruitment, and your buyers' live comments can sharpen your message. Your posts can be informal, drawn from your daily work. Plenty of founders find time to fit it in.

## According to LinkedIn data, this directly helps with sales:



33%

**more leads** when founders post regularly



3.7x

**higher deal size** when execs are followed by prospects



22%

**faster deal velocity** when buyers feel they "know" the founder

Source: LinkedIn Data

“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 would read what I have to say every week or that LinkedIn would drive 65% of Aligned’s leads. I was so wrong.”



**Gal Aga**  
CEO, Aligned

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We wrote this playbook to provide a simple framework for getting started with founder-led growth, starting with LinkedIn, which is now an essential first step. It’s based on interviews with top LinkedIn voices and founders, as well as data from the LinkedIn platform. It features case studies that show that founders posting is directly correlated with higher revenue.

And of course, you still have plenty of other duties, so we’ve written this guide for your situation to be as brief as can be while still containing enough detail. We’ve also filled it with quotes from founders who’ve succeeded—and who think others would be irrational not to participate. ■

# What is founder-led growth?

When we say the names Melanie, Reid, Jensen, and Marc, what companies come to mind? Possibly, those below. That's the goal—your name becomes a byword for the business.

Founder-led growth, or more specifically, founder-led sales and marketing, is often your most powerful lever starting out. Your story, experience, and proximity to the product and problem make you the foremost expert in issues your customers care about. This strategy is just you telling those stories in public.

Founder-led marketing matters because as the cost of creating content falls, trust matters more. So do interpersonal relationships. “People connect with people, not logos,” says

Becca Chambers, CMO at Scale Venture Partners and top personal brand-building voice on LinkedIn. “That’s why social platforms are such a gift for founders—when you show up authentically, you build trust and connection that no marketing budget can buy.”

Being on social can make others feel that they already know and trust your company, and this helps you guide rather than react to public perception. “Your brand is the market’s perception of you,” says TOPO founder and startup advisor Scott Albro. “Our job is to actively shape that perception in a way that drives revenue.”

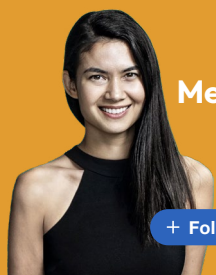
People associate the company with the founder

Canva

 NVIDIA

 salesforce

LinkedIn



Melanie

+ Follow



Jensen

+ Follow



Marc

+ Follow



Reid

+ Follow

## Founder-led sales and marketing:

### ✓ Demonstrates credibility

Founder-led shows how much you know. The goal is not necessarily to reach a wide audience, but a deep one, full of decision-makers. Use your expertise to add to your company's credentials.

### ✓ Builds trust

Early on, your buyers will look to you, the founder, for cues. No marketing team can compensate for your deep product knowledge, passion, or credibility.

### ✓ Gives you an edge

Live public discussions with your customers keep you connected and help you anticipate the market. It's a way to maintain that awareness even as you move out of sales day-to-day.

### ✓ Scales with you

Your brand is a growth lever that becomes ever more useful as you scale. As you add to the company's story, the company's story adds to yours. ■

“77% of buyers are more likely to purchase from companies whose leadership 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.”



**Irina Novoselsky**  
CEO, Hootsuite

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# Founder-led is no more uncomfortable than, say, starting a company

Posting feels vulnerable and may create discomfort. You may stumble. But it's an acquired skill similar to sales, and we commonly see the founders who stick to it see glimmers of validation by month three. By month four, they see competitors lurking, by month five, deals starting to close faster, and by month six, talent reaching out.

The gifting platform Sendoso's executive leadership stuck with it, and through social listening, have calculated that they enjoy 11% higher win rates and 24% larger deal sizes when a prospect sees an executive LinkedIn post.

## Sendoso's executive brands help to increase deal sizes

LinkedIn-influenced deal where the buyer...



*Did not* engage a company executive

**+24%**

*Commented/liked* a company executive post

Comment

Like

**+120%**

*Followed* a company executive

Follow

**Sendoso**

LinkedIn



“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.”



**Arvind Jain**  
Founder, Glean

+ Follow



# The four steps to founder-led posting

Share your unique perspective and turn your daily interactions into a source of ideas. Then, build a habit, measure what works, involve your team, and scale.

## 1 Lead with your perspective

People on social networks don't care about your product yet. They care about your unique perspective on their problems. Lead with that. Start with true stories about buyers feeling active pain, whether or not you solved it, from your customer's point of view.

For example, do you see what's different about these two posts?

### Fina Starts

Founder/CEO at WymCo

We built WymCo with a modern enterprise data backbone that relies on a proprietary algorithm developed by our very own @Chasky Cooper. Any engineering team that isn't using this to connect to their data lakes, data warehouses, data streams and also cross-referencing it with an MCP server are going to be out-competed by #datapioneer teams that are. When I founded the company it was just the four of us in a garage and now we've just hit a new revenue milestone ...

- ✗ Focuses on the CEO's solution
- ✗ Reads like a brochure



### Tessa Lau

Founder/CEO at Dusty Robotics

I spoke with a project team yesterday for a top-5 US airline who is building out the baggage handling system under their hub airport.

Their biggest challenge is trying to accomplish the renovation as quickly as possible, on a brown field site cluttered with existing machinery and MEP overhead. Penalties for lost baggage are steep and damage the reputation of the brand.

They showed me the drawing of what they want to have installed: conveyor belts and walkways, all of which must be placed at the right height to ensure sufficient clearance and smooth operation.

- ✓ Focuses on the customer's pain
- ✓ Reads like a story

## ✓ Use tried and true prompts

Scott Albro, founder of TOPO, recommends three story types.

Story type	What you provide	Example
<b>Customer priority or pain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Understand the problem</li><li>✓ Guidance on solving</li></ul>	Today, I met with 7 independent pizza shop owners in Brooklyn. Their top issue? Managing order flow during peak hours, usually from 6-9pm.
<b>Transformational shift from old to new</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Clear vision of the future</li><li>✓ How to navigate</li><li>✓ Winners and losers</li></ul>	Right now, most pizza shop owners are upgrading their POS to better time pickups and deliveries. In the future, there's an opportunity for AI to predict orders before they even arrive.
<b>Your personal journey or story</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Make it personal</li><li>✓ Hero's journey</li></ul>	After college, I opened a pizza shop. I managed everything with paper and pen. I didn't know the first thing about restaurants or technology, but I knew I wanted to make great pizza and support pizza makers.

## Use AI to reflect

Upload your resume or LinkedIn post history to an AI tool to ask:

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

## Use AI to get started

Record a stream-of-consciousness voice memo and ask:

- “What storylines in here would resonate with [audience]?”
- “What’s the emotional core of what I’m trying to say?”

### ✓ **Submit the evidence**

Show you've lived the pain and solved for it. Share the hard-won lessons that have shaped you and the stories only you can tell because you've been there. These make people want to know more about what you do.

✓ **Earned impact:** "From [humble start] to [big win]—3 brutal lessons"

✓ **Scar tissue:** "The mistake that cost us \$500K—Here's what we did about it"

✓ **Mistake avoided:** "Bootstrapped to \$ARR with X number of staff—Here's why hiring more people would've killed us"

✓ **Social proof:** "Why [big name] trusts me to fix [niche problem]"

✓ **Contrarian hook:** "Why [common advice] is terrible for [certain audience], and what to do instead"

When Kacie Jenkins was SVP of Marketing at Sendoso, she helped her executives get started by encouraging them to post twice a week for one quarter. The point wasn't to go viral, but to connect with the company's audience.

"It's not about you.  
It's how you can help  
others. How do we  
make other people  
feel less alone? Feel  
understood? Feel part  
of something?"



**Kacie Jenkins**

Former SVP of  
Marketing, Sendoso

+ Follow

✓ **Be yourself**

If at any point the advice for how to be, write, or behave feels constraining, ignore it. Founder words are the most powerful when they're a true expression, and you cannot succeed by copying someone else's style. Though there may be patterns you can borrow.

Also, know that the people with the largest followings aren't playing the same game as you. What they do now is not how they got there.

✓ **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 rewrites posts that don't get traction in the first 15–30 minutes. His benchmark is 1–2 likes per minute. This isn't vanity. It's a signal.

✓ **Don't fret over length**

Length is irrelevant if you succeed at depth of value. Short posts work. Long posts work. Partly, it is preference. LinkedIn data shows that writing 400–800 words generates nearly 3x more engagement than posts under 50 words. But there are plenty of exceptions.

“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 kickoff, a playbook, a strategy, a research breakdown, etc.”



**Gal Aga**  
CEO, Aligned

+ Follow

## ✓ Use video to spread further

Video is the fastest-growing language of trust in B2B, and for founders, it's the most powerful way to scale credibility. Especially when you package videos into a series that people can follow.

Rand Fishkin, co-founder and CEO of SparkToro and Snackbar Studios, was an early adopter of video, where he famously solved problems on whiteboards. "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 says. "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 invitations to speak, referrals, and citations.

Informal videos often outperform more polished ones. "I don't have time for intensive video creation. Thankfully, folks are very happy to watch and engage with non-studio-quality video content," says Rand. "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. If a video resonates with my audience, it can easily earn 25–50k+ views in 48 hours."

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

2x

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.

1.6x

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

Source: LinkedIn Internal Data

**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."**



**Rand Fishkin**  
Co-Founder and  
CEO, SparkToro

+ Follow

## Video tips



### Start with a story

A recent customer insight, mistake, or “a-ha” moment.



### Don't read a script

Speak as if to a peer.



### Make it useful

Teach, challenge, or spark a conversation.



### Show your face

Eye contact increases engagement 34%.



## Be ready to handle the heat

Having an opinion means you'll get pushback. That's a feature of this process and it's better than no reaction at all. Contrarian replies and disagreements are great for the algorithm and engagement. Gal Aga replies to every single negative comment with gratitude or a question that invites dialogue.

If it's your ideal buyer 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]?”

“A hate comment from your ICP is worth 100 ‘Great post!’ replies,” says Scott Albrow.

## One approach is to find your “prolific zone”

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

### Challenge conventional wisdom:

“Always be closing is dead. Here's how we 3X'd revenue by firing 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.



### ✓ **Comment often and substantively**

Commenting may be as important, if not more important, to growing your brand. Successful comments are featured like posts and shown well beyond your direct network.

Tag people in ways they'll welcome.

Ask meaningful questions people will actually reply to.

Reply to and like comments, especially in the first few hours.

If you repost others' content, add your own take.

Use your own words, visuals, and frameworks, even if imperfect.

### ✓ **Work the algorithm**

The algorithm prefers you to be consistent and add value.

Post 3x a week, ideally 8-10am in your audience's time zone.

Provide value on LinkedIn itself rather than linking out.

### ✓ **Use the 'punch' test**

Before you hit publish, ask yourself the following questions and keep rewriting or re-recording until the answer to at least two is "Yes."

**Emotion:** Would this make someone feel something?

**Insight:** Would this make someone think differently?

**Action:** Would this make someone want to respond or share?

### ✓ **Just get started**

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.

## **Use AI to help you pack a punch**

**AI doesn't replace your voice, it helps you find it. Through its recommendations, you'll come to learn what's true for you.**

### **To clarify structure:**

- "What's the clearest way to structure this story for LinkedIn?"

### **To find a stronger hook:**

- "What's a bold, surprising, or emotionally resonant way to open this story?"
- "What would make [audience type] feel this is relevant?"

### **To close with impact:**

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

## 2

## Build the machine

Your founder brand won't work if you don't keep showing up. Consistency is not easy when it means time away from building, hiring, or selling, but for the experiment to work, you must finish the marathon. According to LinkedIn data, startup director titles and greater who post at least nine times per year see 3x more engagement and 4x more new followers than those who post only once.

**3x higher engagement** if you post at least nine times per year.

Now, your job here is not to post per se—it is to create the habits where posting becomes reliable and inevitable. You aren't trying to close one sale. You're trying to build a selling machine.

**Your job is to create the habits** where posting becomes reliable and inevitable.

### Don't wait for inspiration

Create structures in your day where you generate material, such as notes and recordings. For example, make a habit of leaving a voice memo after every meeting. That can grow into a content bank you and your team can draw from.



#### Create repeatable rhythms:

Build time in your schedule each week to create a batch of content.

Gal Aga blocks off time on Sundays to create three posts for the coming week, typically:

**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”



### **Crowdsource ideas**

Start with surveys, polls, and audience research—ideally, ones your company owns.

“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.”



**Peep Laja**

CEO, Wynter

+ Follow



### **Record ideas as voice memos**

We talk faster than we can type.



### **Have your marketing team record you**

Sometimes it’s easier when someone else interviews you. Or share a stream-of-consciousness draft and let them edit.



### **Build a content bank**

Create a convenient document you’ll always be able to reach within a few clicks or taps. Store the following:

#### **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:**

top comments, formats, entire posts

## ✓ 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 six 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 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 industry news?

## Use AI to stay in motion

### 1 Turn voice notes into drafts:

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

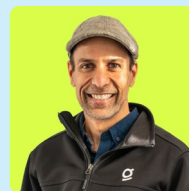
### 2 Feed AI your past posts or notes:

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

### 3 Prioritize when busy:

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

"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."



**Arvind Jain**  
Founder, Glean

+ Follow

## 3 Post, measure, repeat

Once you're in a rhythm, the next question becomes, is it working? As you might imagine, founder-led marketing is difficult to measure. The metrics that matter most—trust, resonance, reputation—can't be fit onto a dashboard. They show up in your deal velocity, direct messages, and the way people talk about you when you're not in the room.

That said, there are indicators you can use as proxies for progress before the pipeline and revenue numbers show.

### First 90 days: Track leading indicators

Views are nice, but what matters are meaningful interactions from buyers and allies. Do not obsess over engagement metrics, nor delete underperforming posts—let it play out, and really learn.



#### CONSIDER:

##### Engagement quality

Comments from ideal buyers, DMs received, reposts by peers

##### Profile views from a post:

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

##### Engagement rate:

Interactions as a percentage of impressions.

##### Audience growth

Follower count (especially from target segments)

**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.

**Confidence score:** Self-rated ease and comfort with posting  
(weekly check-in)

**Top-performing posts:** What unites the posts that did the best?  
(length, tone, subject)

**Impressions:**

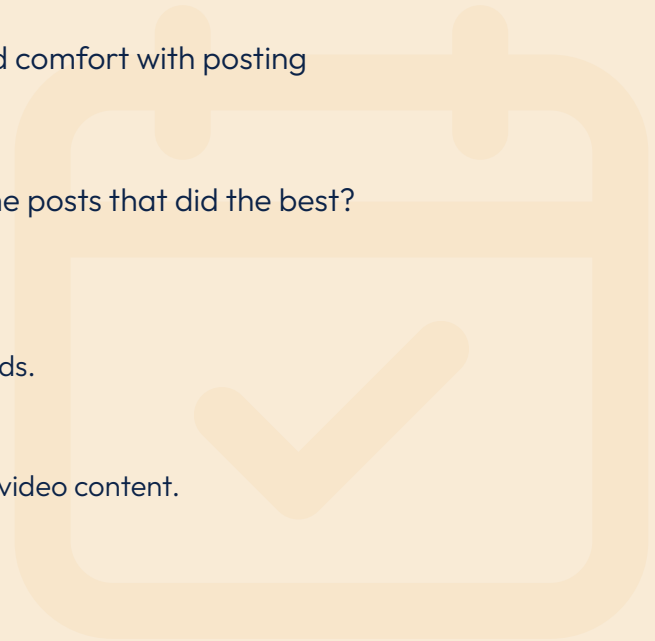
How often your content appears in feeds.

**Video views:**

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

**Time viewed:**

Total watch time for your videos.



## The next 90 days: Track momentum

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



### CONSIDER:

**Prospect mentions** (e.g., “saw your post on LinkedIn”) during sales calls

**Tip:** Train your sales teams to track content mentions.

**Social mentions** using tools like [HockeyStack.com](https://hockeystack.com) and [Factors.ai](https://factors.ai)

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

**Tip:** Build ways to track these in your CRM.

### 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.

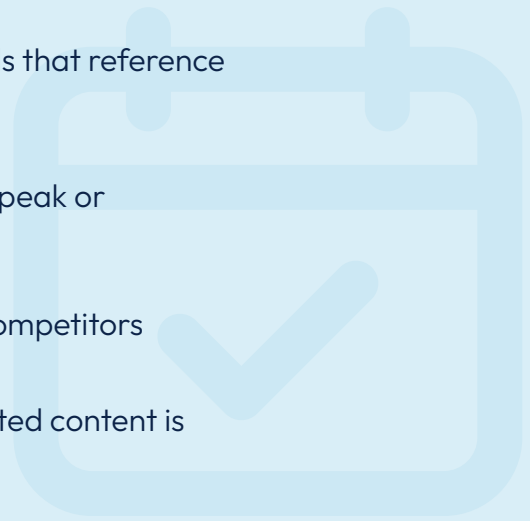
**Measure** deal velocity and pipeline.

**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)



## 6 months in: Measure sales impact

Now you can begin to look at your lagging indicators.



**Increasing inbound pipeline:** You are generating inbounds with your content or personal brand.

**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.

**Gal Aga's rule:** "If 20%+ of your pipeline mentions your content, you've won."



“In the last month, I’ve driven six figures of qualified pipeline through my DMs.”



**Kacie Jenkins**

Former SVP of Marketing, Sendoso

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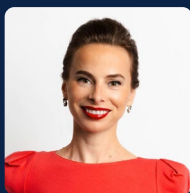
“My main measurement is self-reported attribution: What percentage of people signing up for Wynter or scheduling a demo say that they found me on LinkedIn. It’s about 80%.”



**Peep Laja**

CEO of Wynter

+ Follow



+ Follow

**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 ACV.

## Use AI to spot what's working

### 1 Analyze your top-performing posts. 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?”

### 2 Review your comments and DMs. 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?”

### 3 Track momentum over time. 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?”

## 4

## Scale your strategy

The best founder-led strategies are a bridge. They help you generate that initial demand and evolve from just you or a few others posting to the entire executive and demand team involved—because it works. There are plenty of examples of companies doing this without losing the urgency and authenticity that made them work in the first place.

This will require you to adapt, however. The way founder-led content 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 five.

**Let's break it down by stage.**

### Early-stage: The founder-only era (Pre-Seed to Series A)

You are highly involved in selling and marketing. It is not uncommon for you to be closing deals on your own. If it works, for a time, you and your co-founders are the brand.

- You know the product and vision best. Early adopters buy why you're building, not just what.
- You're building customers and feedback loops. Calls and DMs can shape your roadmap.
- Authenticity beats polish. A raw founder demo beats a polished pitch from a stranger.

### Mid-stage: The founder-plus era (Series A to Series B)

With traction and a growing team, your role shifts. This is when you ask, how do we scale this without losing what made it work?

- You grow more selective. Instead of giving every demo, you focus on strategic accounts, high-profile partnerships, and thought leadership.
- Now, many people are posting, and your marketing team draws from your same bank of material.

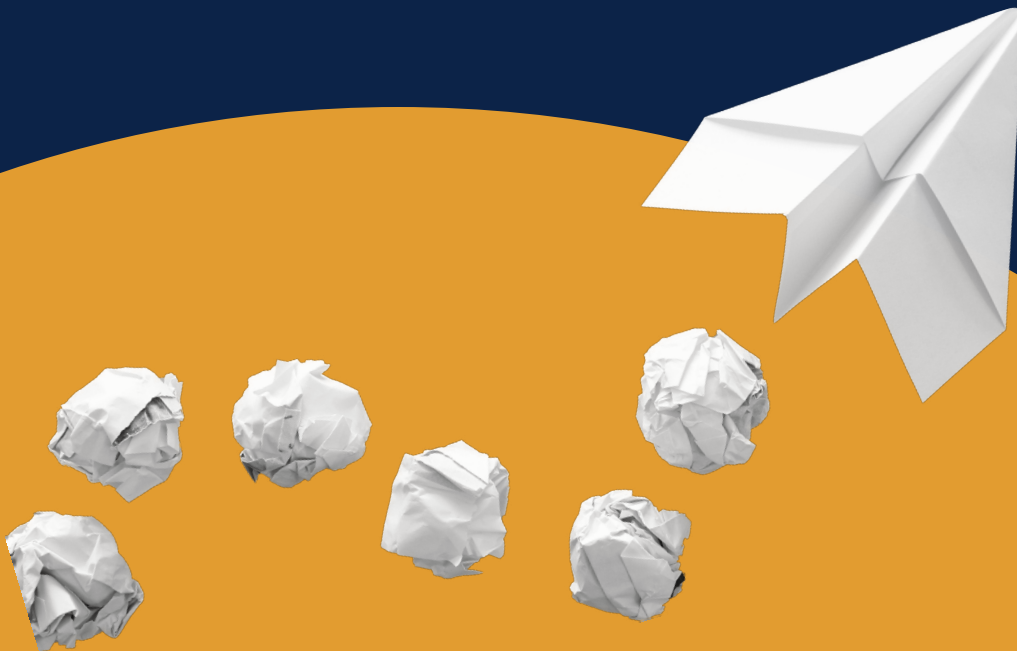
### Mid-stage: The founder-plus era (Series A to Series B) continued

- Your exec team steps into the spotlight. The CTO starts doing technical deep dives. The CMO takes over storytelling.
- You codify what works. Document wins to scale the energy of founder-led growth.

### Late-stage: The founder-led at-scale era (Series B to Growth)

By now, teams handle most of the day-to-day, so founder-led changes again.

- You're the closer (for the right deals). When a Fortune 500 company is on the line, they still want to hear from you.
- You become the culture carrier. The way you sell and tell stories becomes standard operating procedure. You record internal videos so others can mimic your thinking.
- The “founder aura” becomes a multiplier. Your posts, podcasts, and talks drive leads and give your team more credibility. ■



# Amplify your voice

Accelerate marketing-sourced pipeline with thought leader ads and LinkedIn's conversion API.

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. 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 and above post actively generate 33% more leads through paid campaigns. It also shortens the testing cycle instead of guessing.

## 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.

### Companies that run TLAs experience:

1.5x

higher clickthroughs

30%

more efficient cost-per-click (CPC)

2x

follower growth

45%

more demo requests

## For startups, the impact is even bigger:

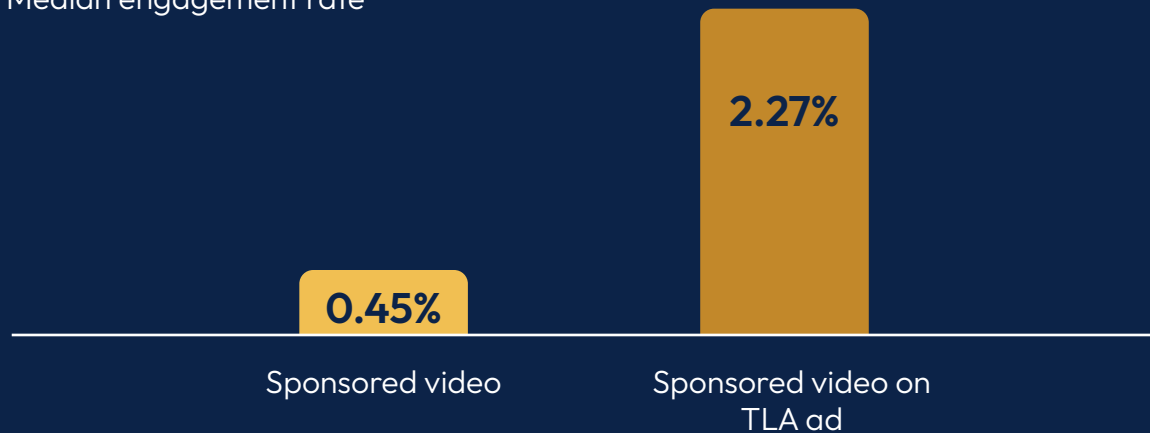


**Source:** LinkedIn Internal Data, June 2025. **Date range:** May 2024 to June 2025.

**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 leadership ad campaigns. **Includes** ads that have generated at least 100 impressions.

## Sponsored Video on TLAs have a 5x higher engagement rate than regular sponsored video ads

Median engagement rate



**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 ads run for Brand Awareness and Engagement campaigns (the only two formats currently supported by TLA).

## Make TLAs part of a full-funnel strategy

Start by promoting your highest-performing organic posts.



### Conversation Ads

Interactive, message-based ads that feel like a chat



### Lead Gen Forms

Pre-filled forms that capture contact info without leaving LinkedIn



### Use first-party data, target account lists, or website actions

To refine targeting and maximize impact

“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.”



**Canberk Beker**

Founder, ROASTed

+ Follow



## A top-performing TLA example



**Mati Staniszewski** · 2nd  
Co-Founder at ElevenLabs  
2w · 🌐

+ Follow ...

August Research & Product Roundup at [ElevenLabs](#) - not a quiet summer! Proud of our research team for once again pushing the frontier and the product team for the continuous incredible pace.

Eleven Music is live. First high-quality, fully licensed model built for broad commercial use. After shipping natural Text to Speech in 2022, launching Eleven v3 (first controllable TTS model), and releasing Eleven Scribe, our Speech to Text model that is able to outperform those from OpenAI/Google, it's amazing to see our team ship something this strong again. With simple prompts you can create original music - film score, game cue, or a background soundscape in a conversational app. And, of course, it's available via API too. We can't wait to see what people build.

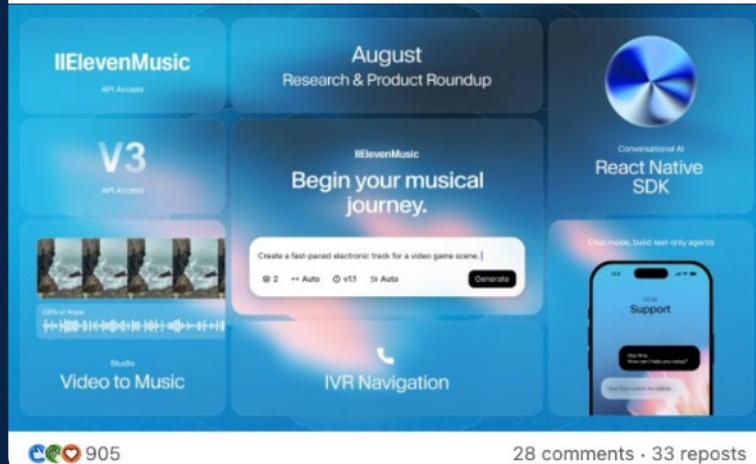
Research is just our foundation. Where we spend most of our time is expanding our platform offerings further: for building fast and reliable conversational agents or creating immersive and beautiful narrations or voiceovers. Recent updates below.

### Conversational AI // Agents platform

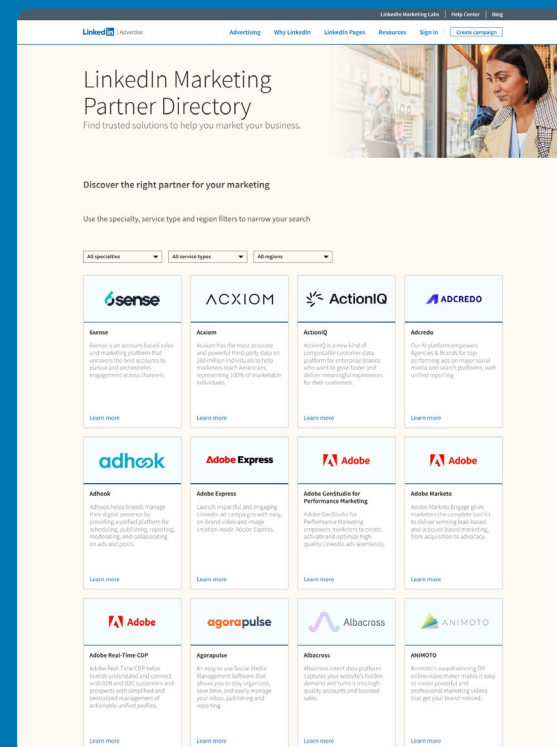
- IVR navigation: let agents follow existing IVR logic
- SDKs: React Native and Kotlin for easier developer building
- Chat mode: we now support text-only agents too
- Orchestration and reliability improvements across all agents

### Creative platform

- APIs: Eleven v3 and Eleven Music available
- Video-to-Music in Studio: automatically add a music track to a video
- The platform is now localized to French, Hindi, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish



Check out LinkedIn's Partner Hub [here](#) to review the robust list of available integrations.



# Put down this guide and get started

Generating pipeline today isn't easy. Founder-led has become a supremely reliable, if not the most reliable, way to do it. Now, getting started may sound daunting. Like yet another task you don't have time for. But given the impact it can have on your business, it's a lever everyone invested in your startup would want you to pull.

"I'd actually challenge you to draft your first post right now," says Craig Rosenberg, Chief Platform Officer at Scale Venture Partners. "Pick one meeting you had last week—the first one that comes to mind—and spend 10 minutes right now writing a post about what you learned. Then before moving on to the next thing, post it.

**Do that, and you've taken the first step toward:**

33%

more leads when founders post regularly

3.7x

higher deal size when execs are followed by prospects

22%

faster deal velocity when buyers feel they "know" the founder

## 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

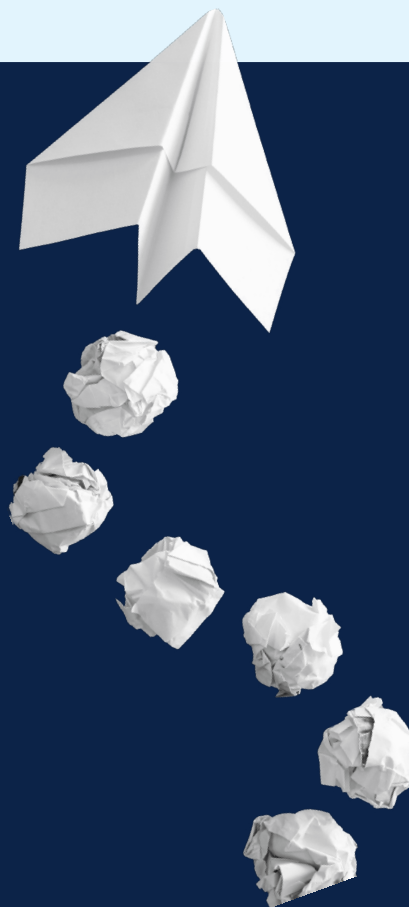


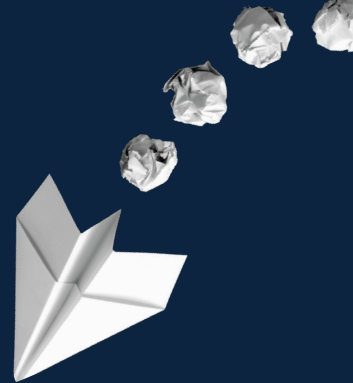
- ✓ Establish a repeatable content rhythm (e.g., Sunday batch writing).
- ✓ Expand your content bank with ICP insights, objections, and goals.
- ✓ Start tagging your ICP and replying to comments to build engagement.
- ✓ Track mentions in sales calls, DMs, and dark social channels.
- ✓ Begin documenting 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., TLAs).
- ✓ 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.





# Founder-led is a great way to grow

And LinkedIn is the best place to begin that conversation.



**Alec Paul**

Founder, SalesBrand

+ Follow



**Irina Novoselsky**

CEO, Hootsuite

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**Arvind Jain**

Founder, Glean

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**Kacie Jenkins**

Former SVP of Marketing,  
Sendoso

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**Becca Chambers**

CMO, Scale Venture Partners

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CEO, Wynter

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Co-Founder and CEO,  
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Chief Platform Officer,  
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**Gal Aga**

CEO, Aligned

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