

The New B2B Influence Playbook

2026

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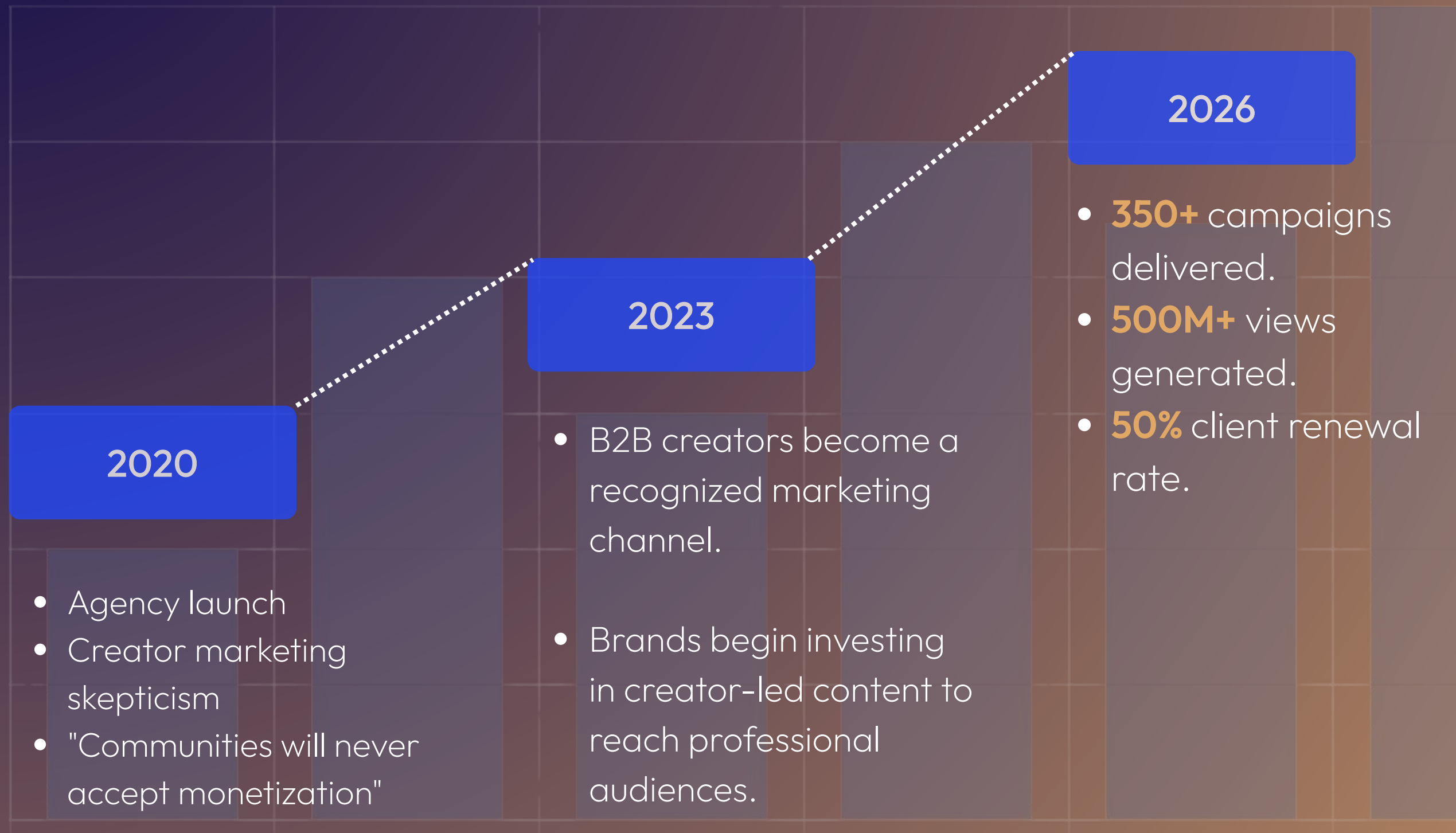


SUMMARY

- Section 1** THE EVOLUTION OF B2B TRUST
- Section 2** THE LINKEDIN & AI FRONTIER
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- Section 4** MAKING B2B MORE HUMAN
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FOREWORD



When we launched in 2020, many doubted that professional communities would embrace creator-led content.

Today, LinkedIn has firmly established itself as a leading B2B marketing channel.

From creative briefing to post-campaign analysis, **Les Années Folles helps brands grow through creators, experts, and content.**

Here's what we're all about.

Foreword from the CEO



Julien MORISSON
CEO Les Années Folles

B2B influencer marketing began as an experimental and uncertain space, where brands and creators were testing its legitimacy and impact. Early campaigns raised doubts about engagement, credibility, and whether professionals would accept creators in traditionally formal industries. At first, influencers in B2B were often seen as risky or not fully aligned with corporate communication standards, and adoption was led mainly by agile brands willing to experiment ahead of others.

Over time, this dynamic shifted as social platforms became a primary gateway for professional information, replacing traditional media as the main entry point. Decision-makers increasingly consume knowledge through LinkedIn, podcasts, videos, and peer-driven conversations. As a result, credibility is now built less on institutions alone and more on visibility, dialogue, and perceived expertise.

Traditional channels like PR, events, and institutional campaigns are no longer sufficient on their own. B2B creators have emerged as key drivers of visibility and trust, acting not just as distribution channels but as strategic partners who shape messaging and insights. Today, B2B influencer marketing is expanding globally, but each market has its own level of maturity, cultural norms, and content preferences. The US, UK, and Germany are more advanced, with structured ecosystems and performance-driven approaches, while other regions such as Spain are evolving rapidly. Content formats also vary, with some markets favoring written content and others prioritizing video and podcasts, making international execution complex and highly non-uniform.

At the same time, artificial intelligence and conversational models are changing how professionals access information, shifting discovery away from search engines toward AI-driven conversations. In this context, B2B influence is becoming more than a marketing tactic: it is evolving into a global infrastructure for visibility, credibility, and ongoing professional conversation.

Today, we work with companies such as Lefebvre Dalloz, Cegid, Pipedrive, Le Tanneur, HubSpot, Abby, and Wizbii across a wide range of B2B sectors, including technology, finance, insurance, legal services, HR, SaaS, and more.

We deliver campaigns across key international markets, including



This ebook is designed to help you understand the new rules of B2B influence in 2026 and how to turn them into business growth.

Welcome to The New B2B Influence Playbook.

INTRODUCTION

Three shifts explain this change

01

STRUCTURE

LinkedIn is flooded with content, so decision-makers now look for trusted voices, not just messages

02

TECHNOLOGY

AI tools like ChatGPT and Perplexity are changing how information is found, making expert content part of AI answers, not just social feeds.

03

CULTURE

Experts have become trusted creators, often influencing professional audiences more effectively than brands themselves.

In 2026, influencer marketing has reached a tipping point. The goal is no longer just visibility, but attention and credibility.



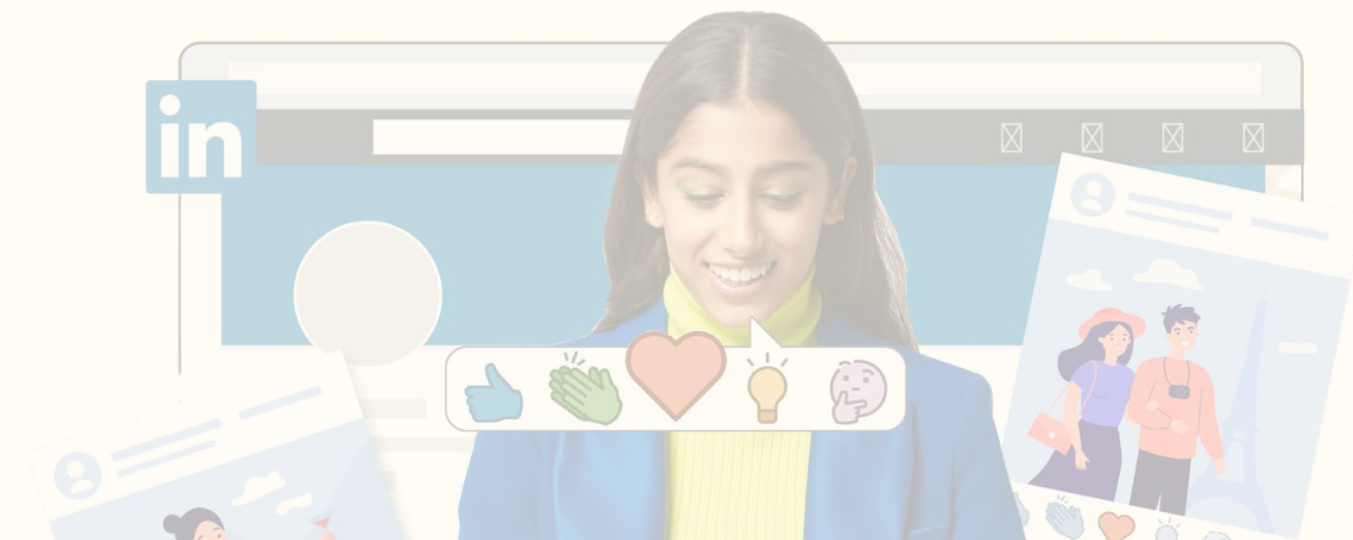
LinkedIn now exceeds **one billion** users worldwide

70%

Of the B2B buying journey happens **before any direct sales contact.**

\$20B

The global influence market **continues to grow**, driven in particular by the rapid structuring of the B2B segment.



One reality stands out: every brand wants influence, but few truly have it.

How do you structure a strategy capable of generating *credibility*, *visibility*, and *tangible business opportunities* at the same time?

This guide explores the major shifts reshaping B2B influence

Rather than predicting the future, this ebook decodes what is already happening.

It examines the changes in platforms, decision-maker expectations, and the levers that create real impact.

One thing is clear: tomorrow's growth won't come from yesterday's playbook.

01

THE EVOLUTION OF B2B TRUST

How the market shifted from "visibility" to "credibility".

For most of the early digital era, B2B marketing operated on a simple assumption: the more people who saw your brand, the better.

Trade publications, banner ads, conference sponsorships, and later LinkedIn content all competed for the same objective: attention.

Reach was the objective. And for a while, it worked well enough. But the rules of professional trust are fundamentally different from consumer trust.

A teenager might buy a pair of sneakers because a celebrity wore them. A VP of Engineering evaluating a six-figure infrastructure investment requires something different: expertise, credibility, and trust.

In B2B, the stakes are higher, the sales cycles are longer, and the number of decision-makers involved in any single purchase can run into the dozens. Visibility, by itself, was never enough.

The Early Years: Borrowed Authority (2005–2015)

The first wave of B2B influence wasn't called influencer marketing at all. It looked more like analyst relations and executive thought leadership — white papers written by industry analysts, keynote slots at vertical conferences, and the cultivation of respected voices who could validate a vendor's claims. Social media changed distribution, not the logic. As LinkedIn grew, experienced practitioners became credible voices for enterprise buyers. The shift from visibility to credibility reflected a more sophisticated buyer.

The Inflection Point: Trust Becomes Scalable (2016–2020)

Buyers grew resistant to traditional outbound tactics, while practitioners began building engaged audiences through experience-driven content. At the same time, LinkedIn's targeting and account-based advertising capabilities gave marketers unprecedented precision. This changed B2B influence. Success was no longer about reaching the largest audience, but the right audience. Companies could combine practitioner credibility with ICP targeting and ABM infrastructure, turning influence into a scalable distribution channel. The most valuable creators weren't the loudest voices. They were the trusted voices within specific professional communities. Trust became scalable because distribution became precise.



The Modern Era: From Awareness to Pipeline (2020–Present)

The pandemic accelerated B2B influence. As in-person events disappeared, buyers relied more heavily on digital channels while growing increasingly skeptical of corporate messaging.

Leading companies responded by embedding creators directly into demand generation, ABM, sales enablement, and paid media strategies. Influence shifted from awareness to pipeline acceleration.

LinkedIn played a central role, allowing marketers to connect creator audiences with specific ICPs, buying committees, and target accounts. Audience quality became more valuable than audience size.

At the same time, creators professionalized, building niche authority and long-term strategic partnerships. B2B influencer marketing evolved from reputation-building into a measurable trust and revenue channel.





LinkedIn Ads

Get Started with
LinkedIn Ads.

Reach over 950 million professionals on the world's
largest professional network.



Our ad platform has ad types to meet
all your marketing objectives.



ADS VS INFLUENCER MARKETING

The Structural Problem with B2B Advertising

Paid advertising remains one of the most scalable ways to reach professional audiences.

LinkedIn continues to deliver strong performance for B2B marketers, particularly for visibility, retargeting, and staying present throughout long buying cycles.

Its limitation is trust. Advertising can amplify awareness, but it rarely creates credibility on its own.

B2B buyers place far more weight on peer recommendations, independent reviews, and insights from respected practitioners than on vendor-owned messaging.

This is where influencer marketing changes the equation. In B2B, the message matters less than who delivers it. Influencer marketing places credible voices at the center of the strategy.

What Influencer Marketing Does Differently

— And Why It's More Cost-Efficient

81% of B2B marketers report increased trust and credibility when working with creators (Marketing Week, 2026).

B2B influencer marketing is a trust transfer mechanism. Practitioner-led creators act as external validators, translating vendor claims into real-world insights that reduce uncertainty and accelerate decision-making. The value is not reach — it is trust and faster movement through the buying process.

This also changes the cost equation. Influencer programs often outperform advertising in complex B2B purchases by accelerating consideration and shortening sales cycles. Audience quality matters more than audience size: a niche practitioner with 8,000 engaged followers can generate more pipeline than an influencer with 200,000 followers outside your ICP.

They Are Not Substitutes

— They Are Complementary

Treating ads and influencer marketing as competing systems is a mistake. They operate on different layers of the same funnel. Advertising delivers scalable exposure, structured targeting, and sustained visibility across long buying cycles. Influencer marketing provides external credibility, peer validation, and interpretive framing of complex solutions. One builds presence. The other builds trust.

94%

of buying groups now use generative AI during research according to LinkedIn, making discovery non-linear and multi-source. In that environment, trust is not created in one place — it is assembled across multiple interactions.



Key Takeaway

The pandemic accelerated B2B influence. As in-person events disappeared, buyers relied more heavily on digital channels while growing increasingly skeptical of corporate messaging.

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02



THE LINKEDIN & AI FRONTIER

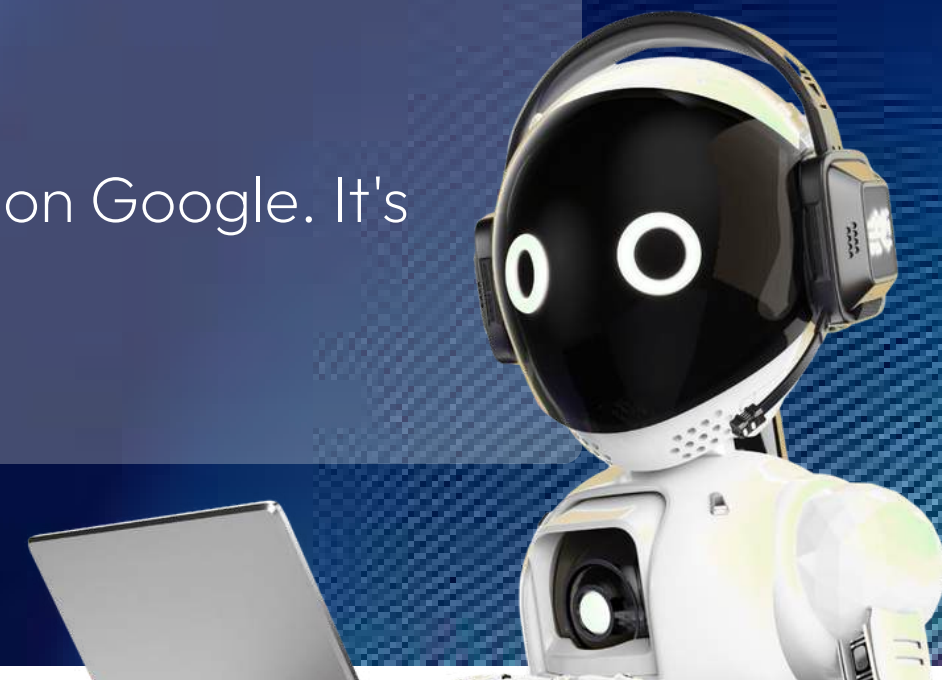
Something significant has changed in how B2B buyers find information. For decades, discovery started with search engines.

You optimised for Google, ranked, and converted. Today, AI-generated answers from ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity are becoming part of that journey.

According to 6sense's 2025 Buyer Experience Report, based on nearly **4,000 global B2B buyers, 94%** used LLMs during a software purchase process.

Unlike search engines, LLMs do not return a list of links. They synthesise information into direct answers, often without revealing the sources behind them.

The question for B2B marketers is no longer just how to rank on Google. It's how to become the source AI turns to for answers.





HOW **LINKEDIN** CONTENT FEEDS **LLMS**

Most brands have not yet grasped the connection between LinkedIn, LLMs, and B2B buying behavior.



4.4x

Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) is the practice of creating content that AI systems can cite and synthesise. Unlike SEO, GEO rewards expertise, specificity, and source credibility.

higher conversion rates make AI-referred visitors significantly more valuable than traditional organic search traffic, according to Semrush.

LinkedIn is now among the top sources cited by leading LLMs. The experts shaping AI today are influencing the answers buyers receive tomorrow.

The Flywheeler



Consistent LinkedIn publishing builds category authority and engagement. LLMs absorb patterns from high-signal public content, which shapes how concepts are represented in AI outputs.

Buyers now complete ~61% of their journey before speaking to sales (6sense, 2025), with AI-driven research playing a central role.

As a result, whoever consistently defines the problem on LinkedIn also influences the language buyers see in AI tools—and therefore how they understand the category before vendor contact.

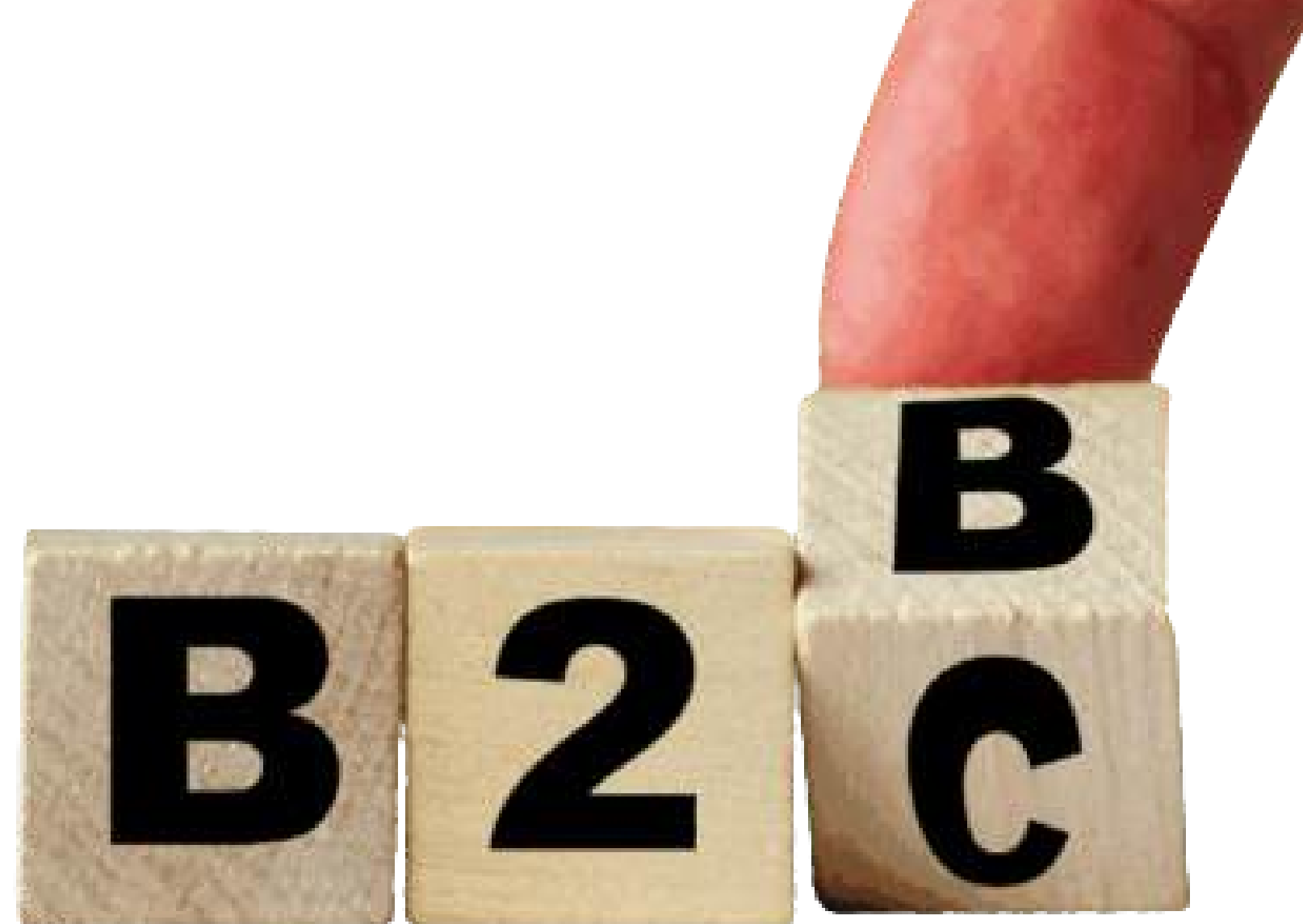
What This Means for Your Influencer Strategy

340%

higher organic reach is achieved by content from real individuals who take clear positions and share proprietary data, according to LinkedIn B2B Institute's 2026 research.

The same dynamic appears in AI systems, where individual authority is cited more often than brand content.

In this context, the best influencers are not necessarily those with the highest engagement this quarter. They are the ones consistently producing ideas strong and clear enough to be learned, repeated, and surfaced by AI systems over time.



WHY **B2B** CONTENT FOLLOWS
DIFFERENT RULES THAN **B2C**

76%

of marketing leaders believe collaborating with creators builds brand authenticity, according to LinkedIn and Ipsos **(1,500 senior and executive marketers across six countries)**.

This matters because LinkedIn is not a repurposed distribution channel. It operates under a different social contract.

On consumer platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, content competes primarily for attention through entertainment, novelty, and spectacle.

On LinkedIn, the dominant expectation is professional value—helping audiences stay informed, learn, and understand how peers are approaching shared business challenges.

This difference is structural, not stylistic. Content that performs on entertainment-led platforms often underperforms on LinkedIn when directly repurposed, not because of production quality, but because the underlying value proposition is misaligned with user intent.

The Formats That Actually Work - Why?



LinkedIn content performance in 2026 is led by one format: **carousels (document posts)**.

+196%

engagement vs video

+39%

median engagement rate (highest format)

21.77%

reach vs average post

12.92%

of all saved posts

According to Buffer's analysis and AuthoredUP (2025-2026)

Carousels drive 20–60 seconds of active dwell time through swiping, which LinkedIn rewards with higher distribution.

Video previously led between 2019–2022 due to early adoption and platform push, but has since become saturated with weaker relative performance.

The Formats That Actually Work - Why?



2x

Video creation is growing 2x faster than other formats.

Yet video reach declined 35% year-over-year across more than 600,000 posts (van der Blom, 2025). The challenge isn't content production. It's distribution.

Supply has outpaced attention.

Video still plays a trust-building role, particularly in low-friction formats like direct-to-camera practitioner or executive content.

These outperform polished productions because they signal authenticity and specificity.

However, retention drops quickly: **only 18% of viewers continue beyond 1 minute (Buffer), limiting sustained distribution.**



What Drives B2B Performance?

+39%

engagement and brand awareness

+30%

revenue and lead generation uplift

For brands investing in influencer marketing (LinkedIn & Ipsos; 1,500 marketers across six markets), the strongest B2B content shares three characteristics: it is specific rather than generic, challenges conventional thinking rather than repeating it, and comes from individuals rather than brands.

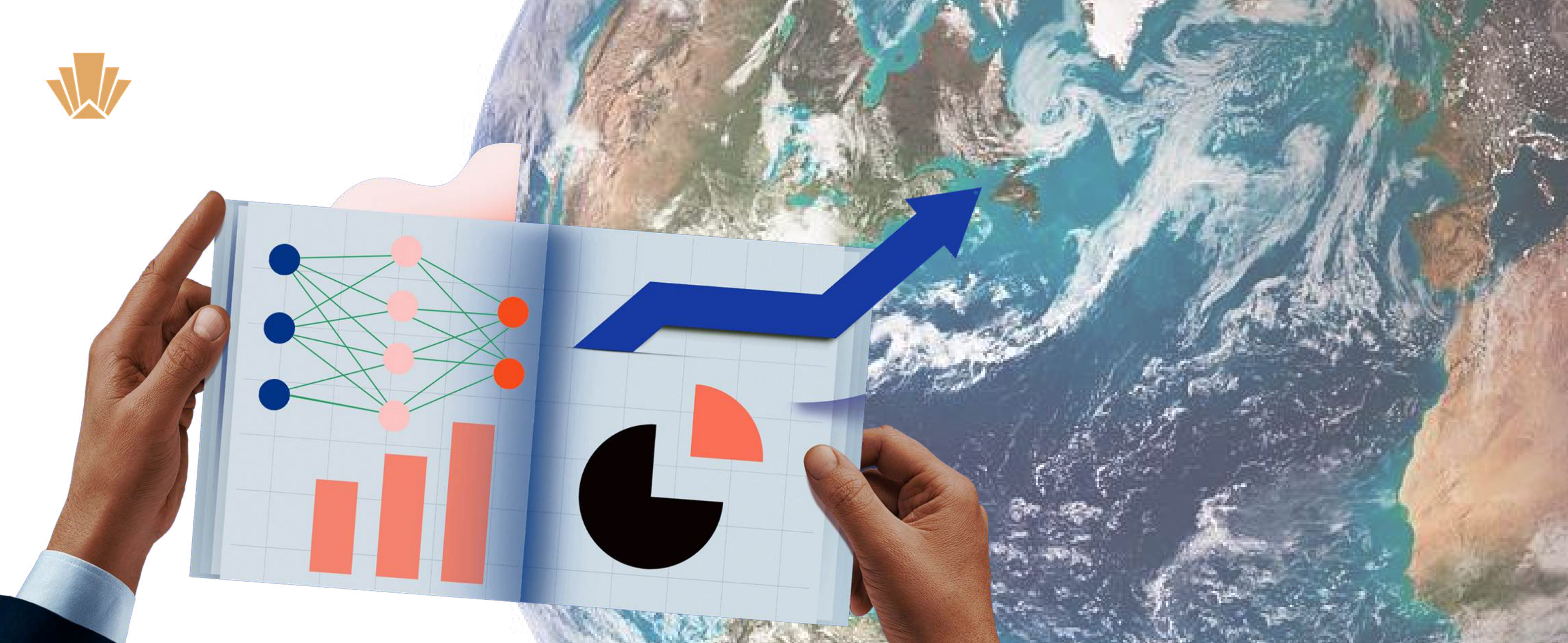
Structural Shift: People Over Brands

2%

of feed visibility comes from company pages (van der Blom, 1.5M posts across 34,000 profiles and 26,000 pages).

2x

higher engagement is seen in employee posts compared to corporate posts on similar topics, reinforcing the dominance of personal profiles in driving organic reach.



INTERNATIONAL SCALABILITY

Global Scale + Platform Context

81%

Of members across 200 countries and 407M+ members in EMEA make LinkedIn the largest regional professional audience at global scale.

The platform also records 1.4B+ monthly visits with 7+ minute average sessions, confirming sustained professional engagement across markets.

Global B2B marketing sits in a structural tension between consistency and local relevance. A message built for one market does not translate cleanly into others due to differences in professional culture, buying norms, and industry structure.

LinkedIn resolves this through its professional graph, enabling brands to activate local practitioners with native credibility in each market rather than relying solely on centralised messaging.

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Why Local Influencers Drive Performance

58%

authenticity
and credibility

49%

industry
relevance

47%

subject matter
expertise

According to (LinkedIn & Ipsos, 2025)

These signals are inherently local and cannot be centrally replicated at scale.

As a result, a French enterprise buyer will consistently trust a local VP of Sales with shared market context over a globally positioned voice without that context. The gap is not linguistic—it is structural and contextual.

Conclusion: International scaling on LinkedIn depends on deploying local credibility under global coordination, not replicating the same message across markets.



SaaS

Scaling Influence Across **Four** Markets

516,847

LinkedIn impressions

289,105

founders and CEOs reached

1,300

Clicks

Have been generated through a coordinated influencer program across 4 European markets.

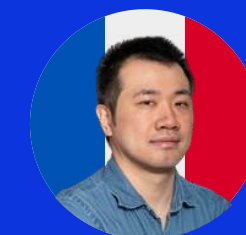
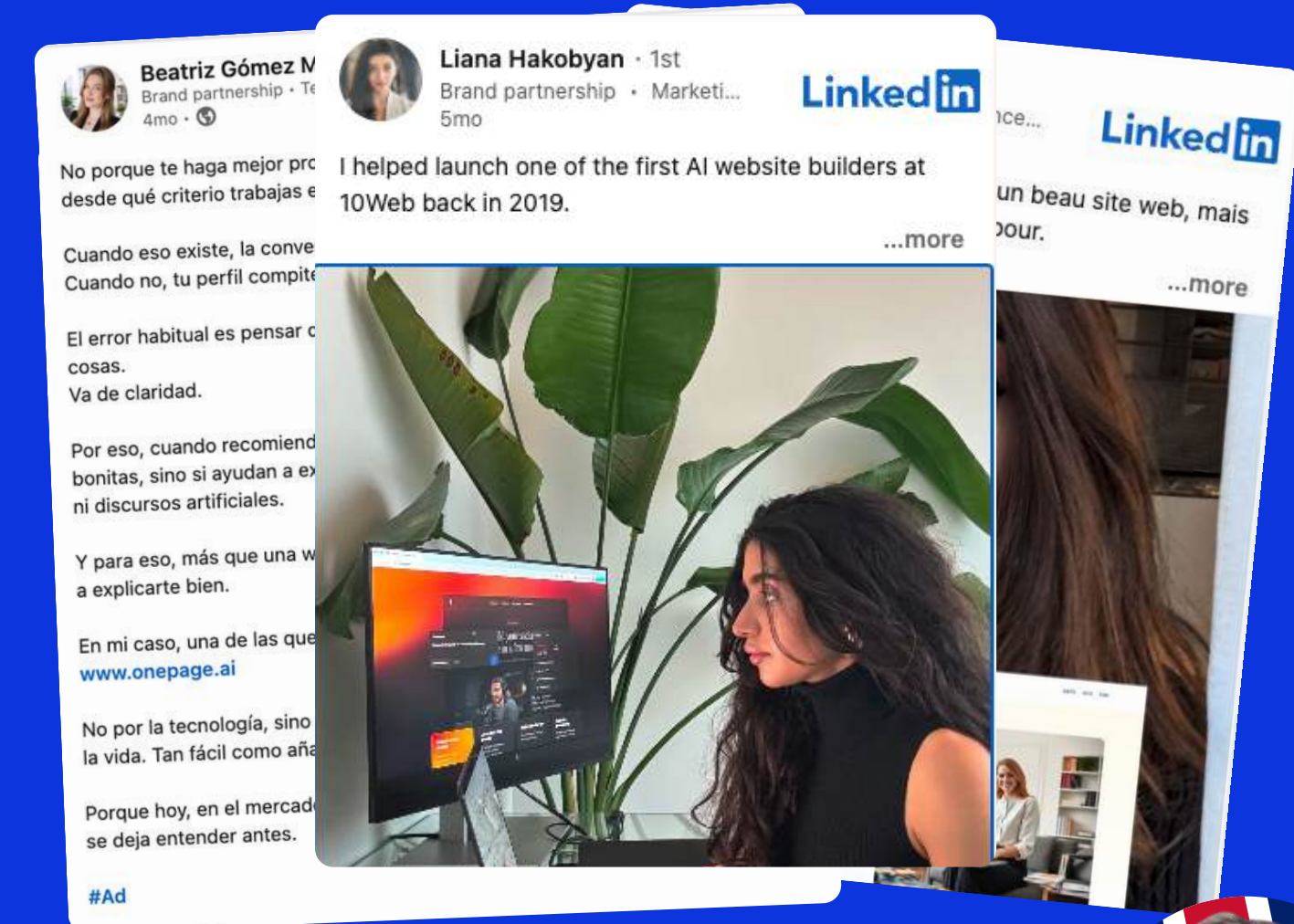
To build credibility in the competitive no-code category, Onepage partnered with Les Années Folles to activate **7 LinkedIn influencers across France, Spain, the Netherlands, and the UK**. Rather than replicating the same message in multiple languages, each creator was given a common positioning framework and the freedom to communicate Onepage's value through their own expertise and local market context.

The campaign reached highly relevant audiences, including 289,105 founders and CEOs, 67,924 marketing professionals, and 117,979 consultants and freelancers. Across 13 LinkedIn posts, the program generated strong visibility while maintaining local relevance in each market.

The outcome demonstrated that international growth on LinkedIn is not driven by translation alone. Content from local practitioners resonated more effectively because credibility was native to each market.

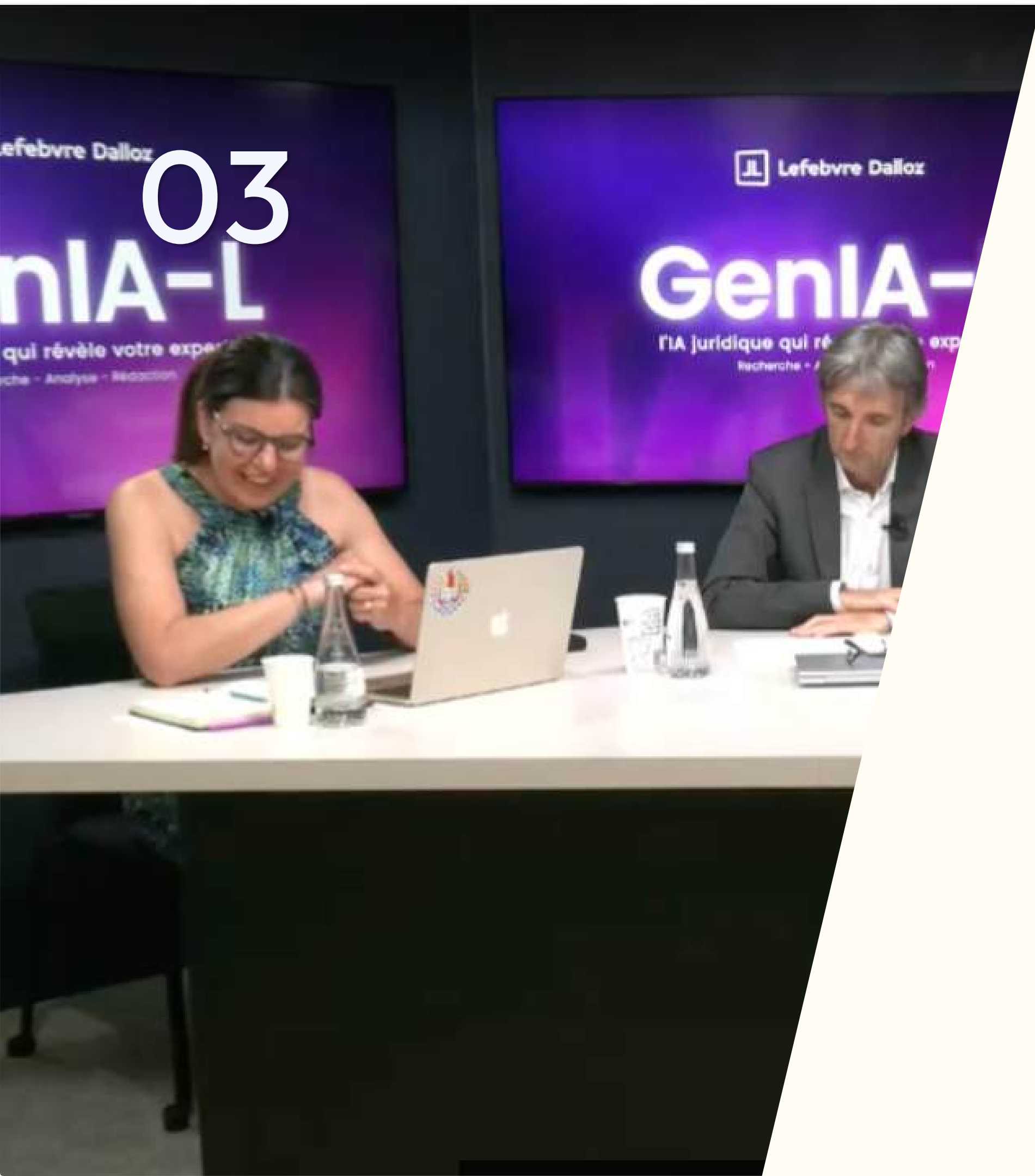
Key lesson: Scale influence globally, but build trust locally. Centralize the strategy, localize the credibility.

CASE STUDY
CASE STUDY
CASE STUDY
CASE STUDY



+ More info on our website.....

03



LONG FORM CONTENT

Podcasts

83% of senior executives listen to podcasts weekly, spending 2x more time with audio content than the general population.

Companies with branded podcasts achieve

58%

higher brand awareness

49%

higher brand consideration

While 25–40% of guests from target accounts enter the sales pipeline within 12 months. The strategic value extends beyond the episode itself. Every podcast can be clipped into LinkedIn videos, quote cards, articles, newsletters, and sales content—turning a single recording into a multi-format content engine.

LinkedIn Live

7x

more reactions

24x

More Comments

The real advantage is not the live event itself but the content ecosystem it creates. A single 45-minute LinkedIn Live can generate:

- A live event with audience interaction
- A replay that continues attracting views
- Multiple short-form clips for LinkedIn distribution
- Articles, newsletters, and lead magnets from the transcript

In practice, webinars sit within this ecosystem but serve a different purpose. Public LinkedIn Live sessions maximize reach and awareness through open participation and organic distribution.

The strongest programs combine both approaches: public live content for visibility, exclusive webinars for conversion. In both cases, the long-form session becomes a source of reusable assets that can be clipped and redistributed across channels for weeks or months after the event.



SaaS

Building Authority Through a **Branded Podcast**

3,000

listens across 5 episodes

5*

rating from 48 reviews

To stand out in the crowded data quality market, DQE launched Let's Talk Data, a podcast designed around practitioner expertise rather than product promotion. Each episode featured respected industry voices discussing real-world challenges in data governance, analytics, and AI.

Featured guests included:

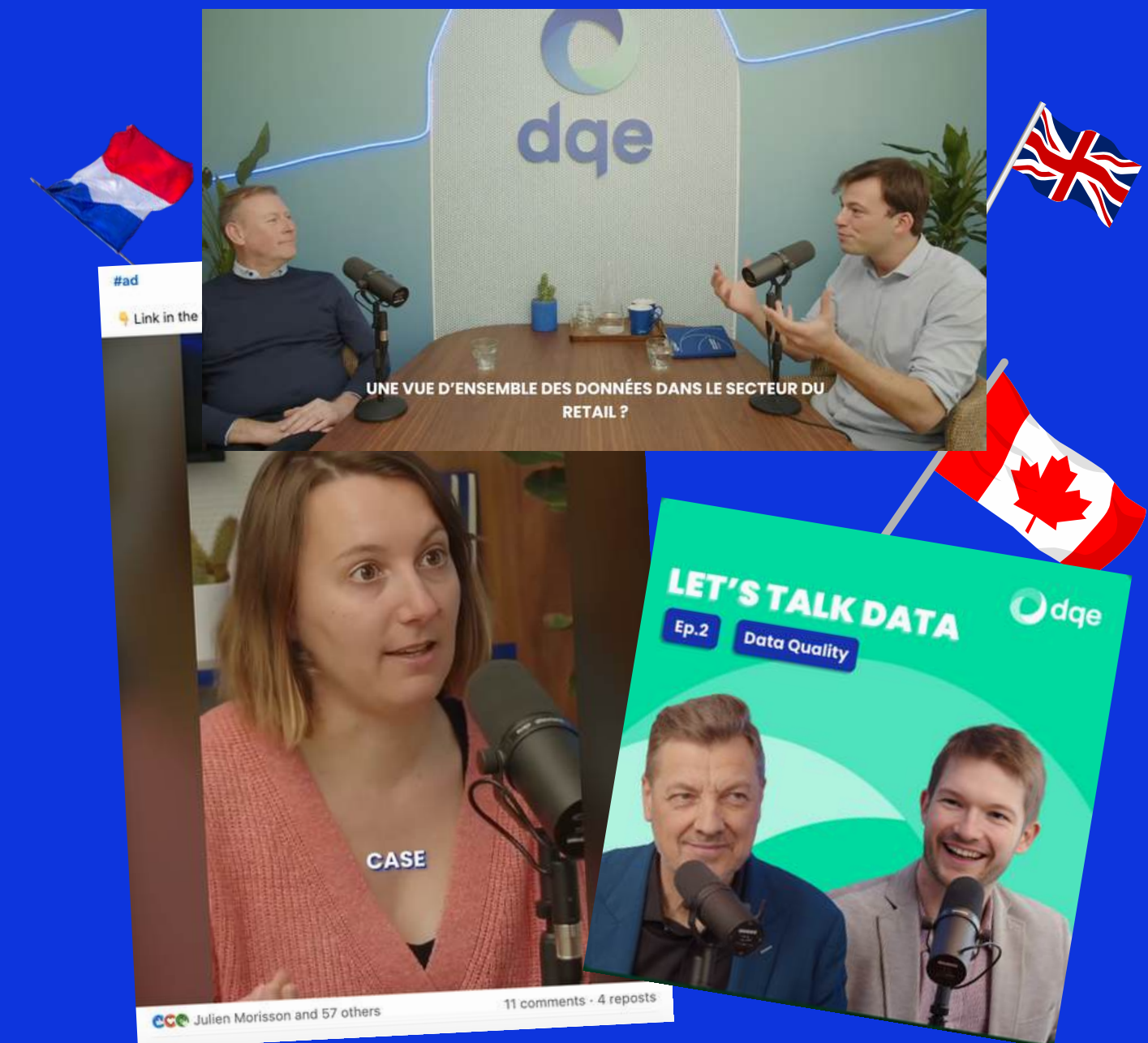
- Steve Collinge (UK)
- Charlotte Ledoux (France)
- Dylan Anderson (Canada)

Les Années Folles managed the entire program from guest sourcing and production to distribution and performance tracking—while DQE provided the host and strategic direction.

Each episode was repurposed into LinkedIn clips, quote cards, and social content, extending the value of every recording and creating an evergreen content engine.

Key lesson: Authority is built faster when brands provide a platform for credible practitioners rather than speaking about themselves. By combining expert guests with multi-market distribution, DQE transformed a podcast into a long-term trust and lead-generation asset.

CASE STUDY
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CASE STUDY
CASE STUDY



ESTELLE DUCOMMUN

*B2B Podcast Manager
Les Années Folles*



“More and more B2B companies are turning **to podcasts because they are an exceptional medium for strengthening employer branding.**

Long-form formats make it possible to break down complex topics in an educational and engaging way, while the immersive nature of podcasts **delivered directly into listeners' ears makes** them a powerful attention and engagement channel.

When combined with **influencer marketing to amplify episode visibility, podcasts become a true marketing lever,** helping brands build credibility, increase awareness, and even generate new business opportunities.

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04

MAKING B2B MORE HUMAN

1 Creative Campaigns: Moving Away from Corporate 'Dry' Content to Viral, Human-Led Formats

There is a data point that CMOs should print and stick above their desks: according to metrics published in LinkedIn's own 2026 B2B Marketing Benchmark,

For decades, the unspoken rule of B2B content was: be credible, be serious, never risk embarrassment. The result was a category aesthetic that buyers learned to scroll past blue gradients, stock-photo handshakes, and whitepapers titled 'Accelerating Your Digital Transformation Journey.' These assets were not wrong. They were simply invisible.

88%

Of CMOs are actively advocating for bolder, more creative B2B campaigns marking a major structural shift away from conservative corporate content strategies.

Source: LinkedIn B2B Marketing Benchmark Report, 2025

The shift that is rewriting B2B content in 2026 is not aesthetic it is psychological.



SaaS

HubSpot : Redefining What B2B Social Can Look Like

258,000

impressions

5,220

CEOs touched

Objective: HubSpot aimed to increase engagement and demonstrate the value of its CRM and marketing tools to French SMEs and startups, targeting marketing/sales specialists and CEOs.

Complex tools like CRM, campaign management, and analytics are hard to explain in a relatable, non-technical way.

HubSpot gathered a roster of six LinkedIn creators

- Jonathan Chan (B2B marketing),
- Khalil Ahmed (SEO),
- Antoine Durand (communication coaching),
- Céline Thomas (management consulting),
- Amelie Favre, Co-Founder (HR/job search)
- Ilnès Sivignon (SEO expert)

and connected each creator's specific expertise to relevant HubSpot features (e.g., SEO experts used Campaign Assistant and Content Remix; HR/management creators used CRM and dashboards).

Campaign Objectives

The campaign sought to boost HubSpot's reputation among managers and marketing managers in the SME and ETI ecosystem, highlight Breeze AI and the Marketing Hub, and prove the platform's ease of use.

The Lesson

Educational content does not have to be dry. By gamifying product demonstration through a competitive, personality-driven format, Les Années Folles proved that B2B audiences respond to creativity and fun as long as the utility remains clear. The Hubsprint Challenge reframed what B2B seriousness looks like.

The companies that have invested in creative bravery on LinkedIn, Notion, HubSpot, Lovable, and Drift before its acquisition, and a growing wave of SaaS-native brands, have consistently outperformed more conservative competitors on brand recall, community growth, and pipeline velocity.

CASE STUDY
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CASE STUDY



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[Read the article](#)



BrandLink & TLA



**LINKEDIN'S OFFICIAL TOOL FOR
CREATOR PARTNERSHIPS**

2

Thought Leader Ads (TLA):

Sponsoring Experts, Not Brands.

Thought Leader Ads (TLAs) are LinkedIn's native advertising format that promotes posts from individual profiles rather than company pages.

Launched in 2023 and now fully mature as a performance format, **TLAs have become the highest-performing ad type** on the platform, and the data behind their dominance is unambiguous.

According to comprehensive benchmarks published in the ZenABM 2026 LinkedIn ABM Performance Benchmarks Report drawn from real campaign data across 211 B2B companies, 161,256 LinkedIn ads, **\$5.5 million** in ad spend, and campaigns across **29 countries**.

Thought Leader Ads deliver:

2.68%

median CTR approximately **6x higher** than single-image sponsored content (0.42% CTR).

\$2.29

median CPC representing up to a 77% lower cost-per-click vs. standard sponsored content (\$4–8)



Beatriz Gómez Marín ✓ • 1st
Brand partnership • Te enseño a encontrar
4mo • 🌐



Liana Hakobyan ✓ • 1st
Brand partnership • Marketing Strategy Lea
5mo • 🌐



Inès Sivignon • 2nd
Brand partnership • Agence de référencem
5mo • 🌐

Thought Leader ADS

Source: ZenABM 2026 LinkedIn ABM Performance Benchmarks Report

To put those numbers in commercial terms, \$1,000 spent on Thought Leader Ads generates approximately 327 clicks. The same \$1,000 on single-image sponsored content generates approximately 71 clicks, a 4.6x difference in raw click volume from a format that is often dismissed as 'just boosting someone's post.'

The mechanism is psychological before it is algorithmic. According to data from the Edelman 2026 Trust Barometer, 68% of B2B decision-makers trust insights from a technical expert or executive peer more than any form of branded advertising from the same company. TLAs exploit this trust gap structurally; the ad appears as content from a real person, not from a logo. LinkedIn's algorithm registers it as organic social content rather than an interruption, which is precisely why engagement rates are categorically higher.

The TLA philosophy shift: Stop buying impressions for your brand. Start buying attention for your experts. The buyer who trusts your CMO's LinkedIn analysis is already pre-sold on your category expertise before a sales conversation begins.

An enterprise portfolio review by Induji Technologies (2026 Analysis) confirms these field results: TLAs delivered 3x higher CTR and 40-50% lower cost-per-lead compared to traditional Sponsored Content.

Similarly, Fractional Demand's 15-month analysis across a B2B SaaS portfolio (17.4 million impressions, \$3.5 million in spend) found TLAs outperforming standard ads by 6.9x on CTR with the performance gap widening, not closing, as budgets increase and auction competition heats up.



For CMOs building the 2026 LinkedIn playbook, the strategic implication is clear: Thought Leader Ads should not be a minor test budget line. They should anchor the paid amplification strategy.

The playbook is sequential: identify your highest-credibility internal voices (CEOs, CTOs, field practitioners), develop a content strategy that documents genuine expertise rather than product features, and use TLAs to distribute that content to precisely targeted buying committees.

One reported outcome from ZenABM's 2026 dataset includes a \$120,000 closed deal traced directly back to just \$2,035 in TLA spend.

3

If Thought Leader Ads represent the internal expert strategy amplifying your own people BrandLink is the external creator strategy: placing your brand adjacent to the most trusted voices on the platform.

BrandLink launched in June 2024 as LinkedIn's native video advertising partnership program, initially with select publishers. By August 2025, LinkedIn executive updates reported to Reuters that BrandLink revenues had surged nearly 200% in Q2 versus the prior quarter, with publisher and creator payouts more than tripling year-over-year. The program has since expanded significantly.

BrandLink allows brands to enter that trusted editorial context not by interrupting it but by associating with it. As reported by industry trackers at Global Dating Insights (March 2026), LinkedIn is also expanding its Premium Creator Sponsorships with Top Voices 360 program, enabling brands to partner directly with LinkedIn's most influential creators for multi-touchpoint sponsorships: exclusive editorial shows supported by BrandLink ads, co-branded posts, industry event appearances, and additional content integrations.

The platform's existing Premium Events business generated \$18.9 million between H2 FY2025 and H1 2026, signaling the commercial viability of this creator-integrated approach at scale.

Combined strategy for 2026: Use Thought Leader Ads to amplify your internal voices at scale, and BrandLink to place your brand alongside the external voices your buyers already trust. Internal authority + external credibility = category dominance.

Results

200%

BrandLink revenue grew rapidly in Q2 2025 vs. the prior quarter, establishing it as one of the fastest-growing ad products on the platform.

130%

higher video completion rate compared to traditional video ads.

23%

higher view rate compared to standard LinkedIn video placements.



LinkedIn Introduces BrandLink to Enhance Video Ad Options for Advertisers

Source: LinkedIn financial reporting via Reuters, August 2025

WAHEED JAMIL

*UK Client Manager
Les Années Folles*

“

Thought Leader Ads have become the **ultimate international growth** lever because they combine the credibility of a human voice with the power of media distribution.

Today, audiences no longer want to hear from brands alone; they want to **listen to experts they already follow, trust, and connect with through shared values, challenges, and perspectives.**

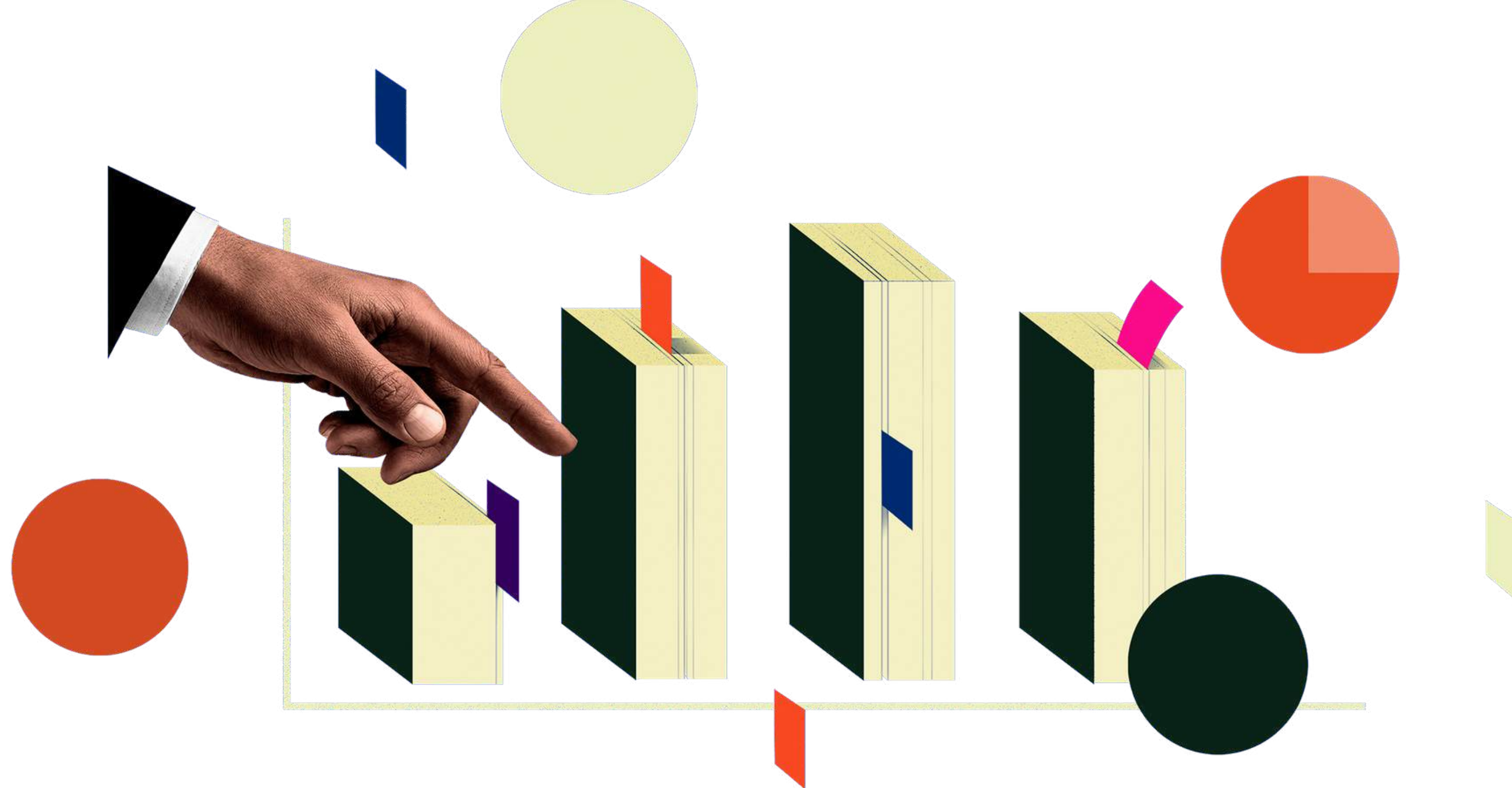
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05



THE ACTIONABLE PLAYBOOK: EXECUTION



THE 4-STEP LAF METHOD: DATA MAPPING, CONTENT STRATEGY, BRAND INTEGRATION & AMPLIFICATION

Data Mapping

Stage 1 : Expert Mapping

Internal experts are ambassadors within your own ecosystem founders, C-suite executives, senior practitioners, and customer-facing team members who have genuine domain credibility and are willing to build a public voice. According to the LinkedIn and Ipsos 2025 Benchmark, thought leaders and industry analysts are rated the most effective influencer type by 28% of marketers. Internal executives often carry even higher trust than external influencers because they have skin in the game.

External influencers don't need to come from your industry. They can operate in entirely different verticals, provided they have a specific niche audience that overlaps with your target ICP. The influencer brings trust and distribution. The brand brings resources, expertise access, and production support. The relationship is collaborative, not transactional.

Customer voices are the most underutilized layer. Customers are rated the second most effective influencer type by 23% of marketers. A senior customer speaking from direct experience carries a credibility that no paid influencer can replicate.



Data Mapping

Stage 2 : Audience Alignment

Les Années Folles maps each potential influencer's demonstrated audience against your target ICP across three dimensions:

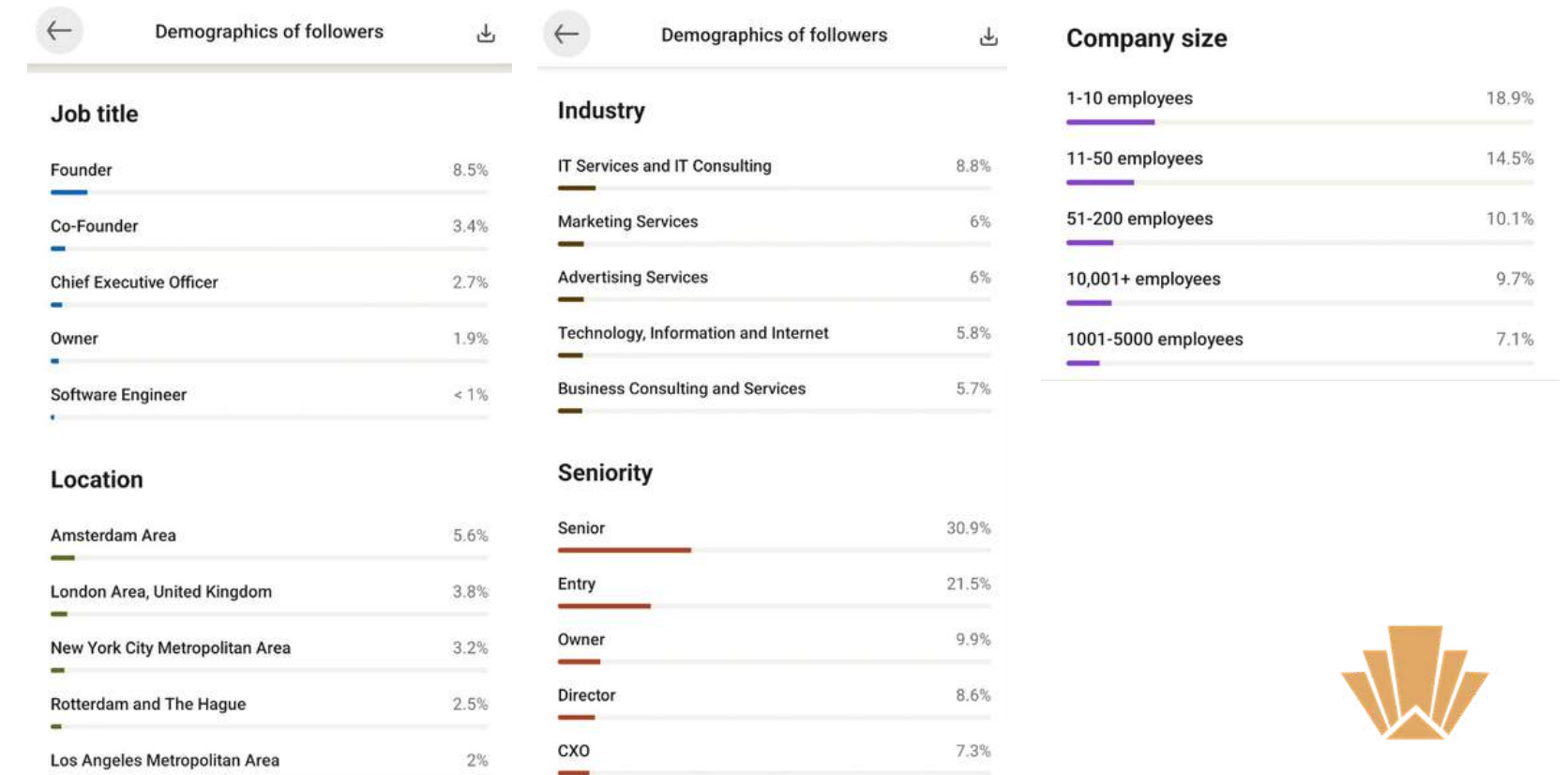
Demographic alignment examines job titles, seniority levels, and functional roles. The metric to track: what percentage of a creator's recent engagers hold the specific titles you need to reach.

Firmographic alignment assesses company size, industry vertical, and geographic concentration. An influencer with deep reach across French SMEs may generate exceptional results for a brand targeting that segment and fail completely for the same brand expanding into enterprise accounts or the US market.

Intent and behavioral alignment goes one step deeper: not just who the audience is, but what they act on. Saves and shares elevated by LinkedIn as key algorithm signals in Q4 2025 are the highest-intent engagement metrics because they signal that a reader found the content valuable enough to return to or redistribute. It's also worth examining whether engagement is organic: pod-driven activity can be identified through the frequency, tone, and profile backgrounds of those engaging.

In practice, this means requesting two things from potential influencer partners: a breakdown of their audience by job function and seniority and their top-performing posts by saves and shares over the previous 90 days. We will dive deeper into the full audit process in the next section.

Example of raw data retrieved from the influencer



GÉRALDINE CREUZA

*Talent Manager
Les Années Folles*



“

When sourcing influencers, I always start with the client’s **target audience and industry** in order to identify the most relevant platforms to activate.

I then rely on the **professions and areas of expertise** that seem the most coherent, particularly thanks to my experience as a coach and former recruitment agency manager.

Once the profiles are identified, I first analyze their **editorial line before even looking at their statistics**: the quality of their writing, the authenticity of their content, the tone they use, and whether their content feels overly generated by AI.

Only after this initial review do I evaluate their audience, follower count, and their real ability to generate engagement and reach.

2 Content Strategy

Top of Funnel: awareness & credibility Long-form thought leadership podcast episodes, LinkedIn Lives, and webinars establish category authority without product messaging. The Edelman-LinkedIn 2025 Report found that more than 75% of decision-makers say a single piece of thought leadership led them to research a product they had never previously considered.

Mid-Funnel : consideration & trust co-produced content carousel posts, deep-dive articles, co-hosted LinkedIn newsletters provides substantive depth and use-case specificity. According to LinkedIn's benchmark data, 64% of B2B buyers trust thought leadership content more than product sheets or case studies. This is where brand-adjacent influencer content accelerates deal velocity.

Bottom of Funnel : decision & conversion customer voice content testimonials, podcast appearances by existing clients, LinkedIn Live conversations between buyers and your team —reduces perceived risk at the moment it matters most. According to Amra & Elman's 2025 B2B Influence Marketing Report, 94% of B2B marketers who execute influencer programs strategically report positive results, with an average ROI of 520%.



Content strategy in an influencer-led program is not about what the brand wants to say. It is about what the buyer needs to hear, delivered through a voice they already trust, in a format they actually consume. The content architecture maps directly to buyer journey stages.

3

Brand Integration

Tier 1: Content collaboration, the brand and influencer co-produce content as genuine peers. The influencer speaks in their own voice, to their own audience, with the brand's intelligence and resources behind them.

Tier 2: Always-On Ambassador Programs A selected group of external influencers and brand representatives maintain a sustained presence, posting regularly, appearing in each other's content, and cross-promoting live events. According to TopRank's 2025 B2B Influencer Marketing Study, 99% of marketers running always-on programs rate them as effective, the highest satisfaction rate of any B2B marketing tactic tracked.

Tier 3: Customer Voices When a customer becomes a communicator through a case study, a LinkedIn post, or a co-produced piece of content they activate peer trust, which is the highest-converting signal in a B2B buying journey.



In all three tiers, the same principle applies: the influencer activates their organic audience first. No paid support is introduced at this stage. The organic run is a deliberate data collection phase, and what happens during it determines everything that comes next. We will dive deeper into partnership structures, briefing frameworks, and how to manage these relationships at scale in the next section.

4 Data collection & Amplification

Before any amplification budget is allocated, the organic performance of every piece of content must be measured in full. This is the step that separates a strategic influence program from a content distribution exercise.

The organic run generates the signals that reveal what is resonating, with whom, and why. Every available metric is collected:

- **Engagement quality:** saves, shares, and comment sentiment from your target ICP.
- **Reach and impression data:** Who is seeing the content and how far it is traveling organically.
- **Profile and follower signals** visits, connection requests, and follower growth tied to specific content.
- **Click-through and lead gen signals** : traffic, form fills, and downstream conversion activity.

This data does two things: it identifies which content has already proven itself with a real audience, and it reveals exactly who in that audience is responding sharpening the targeting precision of everything that follows.

Only once this organic signal is collected does amplification begin, through two distinct mechanisms.



Only once this organic signal is collected does amplification begin, through two distinct mechanisms.

Thought Leader Ads (TLA) takes content that has already demonstrated organic resonance and extends its reach with ICP-level targeting precision.

Personal profile posts receive 8x more engagement than identical content from company pages, and that gap is widening.

TLA preserves the individual voice and trust that drove the organic performance while delivering it to a precisely defined ICP at scale.

BrandLink operates as a parallel awareness layer, entirely separate from the influencer relationship.

Through LinkedIn's official BrandLink program, the brand places video advertising adjacent to relevant creator and publisher content, maintaining consistent brand exposure to ICP audiences regardless of what the organic content cycle is doing at any given moment.



CTA!!!



THE CRITICAL COMPONENT:
WHY YOUR CAMPAIGN FAILS WITHOUT A
STRATEGIC ASK

Content without a CTA is philanthropy !

It builds goodwill, generates impressions, and deposits credibility into your brand's account, but it does not convert that equity into pipeline. In B2B marketing, where sales cycles run for months and involve multiple decision-makers, the CTA is not a courtesy button at the bottom of a post. It is the architecture that transforms content consumption into commercial momentum.

The most powerful B2B CTAs in 2026 are not 'Learn More' or 'Book a Demo.' According to Foundation Inc.'s 2026 LinkedIn Benchmark Analysis of over 220,000 B2B customer journeys (compiled via Demand Data's tracking datasets), brands using influencer marketing outperform non-users by 30% on lead generation.

The CTAs that drive that performance are specific, high-value, and tied to content that a buyer would genuinely want to consume not forms they are reluctant to fill in exchange for content they suspect is generic.



High-value CTA assets for B2B LinkedIn campaigns in 2026 include:

- Gated research reports and proprietary data studies.
- Webinar registrations with a named industry expert as the primary draw.
- Interactive self-assessments and diagnostic tools.
- Exclusive community access or cohort program enrollment.
- First-access downloads tied to a live activation (combining content with event momentum).



SaaS/ Tech

Driving Lead Magnet Downloads Through Thought Leadership

150,000

impressions

50

downloads

2%

engagement rate

30,000

employees touched
to mid-size
companies

The Actors of This Campaign

- Harry Portch
- Dominic Joyce
- Dan Mian.

Campaign Objectives

The campaign aimed to position Cegid as a thought leader in AI trends shaping the UK HR market, drive eBook downloads of the 2025 HR Trends Report among HR managers, increase brand awareness within the HR and talent acquisition community, generate qualified leads and conversions from visitors to eBook downloads or sign-ups, and build credibility through expert-driven content.

The Strategy

Les Années Folles partnered with three established LinkedIn influencers specializing in HR, recruitment, and talent acquisition. Together, they co-created a comprehensive 2025 HR Trends Report to serve as the lead magnet. A targeted content roadmap was developed focusing on key HR challenges: onboarding, retention, reskilling, and AI implementation. Coordinated LinkedIn campaigns targeted HR managers, TA specialists, and recruitment professionals across the UK, leveraging the influencers' combined reach of approximately 200,000 followers to amplify messaging and drive organic engagement.



+ More info on our website.....
[Read the article](#)

How We Saved a Client €16,000 on Lead Generation

400+

registrations

400€

cost per qualified lead

16,000€

in direct savings

The Solution

Les Années Folles designed a LinkedIn Live campaign anchored by a trusted legal voice. Florence Bernier-Debbabi, a recognized practitioner, hosted the live session focused on GenIA-L capabilities. The CTA was simple: register for the live session to receive the replay and get early access to a personalized demo. The campaign targeted HR managers and directors specifically.

The Results

The campaign generated over 400 registrations for the LinkedIn Live session. Each highly qualified lead defined as validated sales-ready HR managers and directors, not just content downloads cost approximately €400. Compared to the client's previous cost per lead through paid search and email acquisition, this represented nearly €16,000 in direct savings on qualified lead generation.

The Challenge

The client needed to generate highly qualified leads for a GenIA-L demo, an AI-powered legal search tool targeting HR managers and directors across France. Traditional channels like paid search and email acquisition were delivering leads at high costs with inconsistent qualification levels.

CASE STUDY
CASE STUDY
CASE STUDY
CASE STUDY

06

MEASURING REVENUE & IMPACT

Your B2B influencer campaigns generate data.

They do not automatically generate decisions. **Likes, comments, and views** exist, yet teams cannot tell which reactions matter for the pipeline.

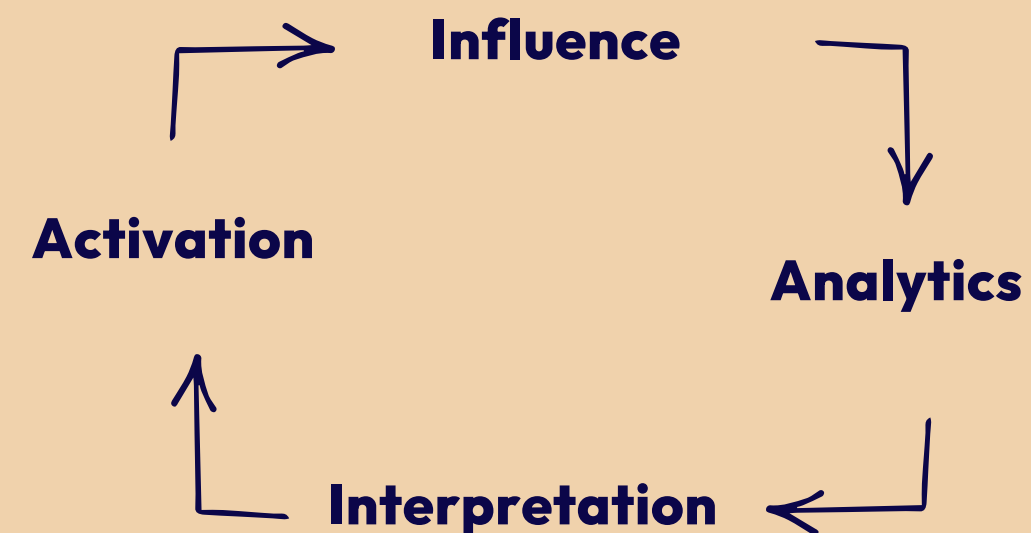
So the real question is this: **are you measuring activity, or are you decoding intent?**

Most B2B marketing teams operate inside what can be called a fragmented loop. In this loop, influence leads to analytics, analytics lead to interpretation, and interpretation leads to activation but the connections are broken.

Dashboards do not equal decisions. Opinions replace causality. Activity is measured, but direction is not. This is a loop that measures without deciding.

According to Linqia's 2026 State of Influencer Marketing report, **71% of marketers cite determining ROI** as their top challenge, ahead of even finding the right creators to work with. The difficulty is not generating data; it is knowing which data actually predicts revenue.

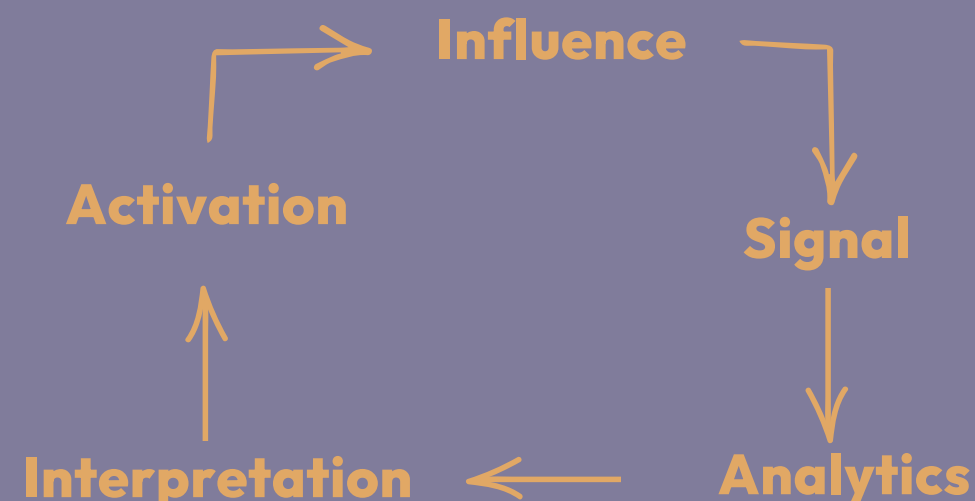
Fragmented Loop



- Dashboards $\neq$ decisions
- Opinions replace causality
- Activity is measured; direction is not.

A loop that measures but does not decide.

Decision-Driven Loop



- Expectations defined first
- Behaviour tested against signals
- Decisions shape the next cycle

A loop designed to compound

2 Think In Steps.

Signals Reveal Buyer Proximity

Not all engagement is equal. Signals reveal how close a buyer is to a purchase decision.

- Saves and shares indicate content retention; the buyer is storing it for future reference or distributing it to other stakeholders.
- Comments with questions signal explicit interest, especially when they mention budget, timing, or a specific problem.
- Direct messages from decision-makers represent inbound intent when a target buyer moves from public comment to private message, they are signaling readiness for a conversation.
- Profile visits from multiple stakeholders at the same account indicate buying committee activation.
- Repeated engagement from the same individual over time signals sustained research behavior.
- Reactions from non-buyers or junior professionals are noise—filter them out.

LinkedIn rolled out new post analytics in 2025 that include high-intent signals, enabling teams to calculate an Intent Index: saves plus sends plus reposts divided by total reactions. Not all engagement carries equal commercial weight.



Before posting any content, define several things:

Which region and industry should generate traction? Which ICP roles and seniority levels should react? Which influencer to activate, which topic triggers authority, and most importantly which interaction types indicate real intent. A comment with a question, a save, a direct message, a repeated profile visit.

3 What We Measure: Three Layers

Individual behavior metrics include reactions, comments, comment depth, saves, shares, profile views, connection requests, direct messages, and repeat interactions over time.

Account-level metrics capture the number of employees engaging, seniority mix, departments represented, recurrence of engagement, and engagement across multiple influencers and topics.

Context metrics cover industry, geography, company size, and whether an existing opportunity already exists in your CRM.

Compressing Metrics into Scores

To make this usable, compress metrics into clear rules:

- Stakeholder present at least one decision maker (C-suite, Director engaged from the target account)
- Buying group forming two or more people from the same account engaged across your content
- High attention: three or more interactions from an account within a defined period
- Active curiosity: a save or a direct message
- Momentum building multiple touches from the same account across days or weeks



Forrester's 2026 B2B research found that buying

Groups now involve 13 internal stakeholders and nine external participants on average, with complex purchases involving generative AI features seeing buying groups double in size. Among respondents with six or more internal participants, 94% said larger groups delivered clear benefits, including broader perspectives, shared effort in validating solutions, reduced risk of poor decisions, and greater likelihood of securing budget approval. If your measurement framework does not account for multi-stakeholder activity, you will systematically undervalue the influencer content that activates entire buying committees.

4 The Decision Board

Each row of your decision board represents a different content strategy. Use it to decide where to invest or cut the budget.

ICP presence is the percentage of decision-makers engaged, weighted by seniority and industry match. When a content strategy consistently reaches CFOs in insurance, your precise target ICP presence is high. When it primarily reaches junior marketers outside your ICP, it is low.

Account activation is the moment a company moves from audience to sales priority. You are no longer observing them; you are deciding this company deserves resources and that marketing and sales should coordinate.

Intent scoring is scored using leading indicators, first-time comments from ICP, following the influencer, light profile visits, and lagging indicators such as saves, repeat engagement, multiple stakeholders from the same account, direct messages, and high-intent comments that mention budget, timing, or a specific problem.

When you see high ICP presence plus high account activation plus high intent intensity, you invest. When you see low presence plus low activation, you cut.



Share of Voice: Beyond Vanity Metrics

Share of Voice measures your brand's visibility relative to competitors within a defined audience or topic space. It is calculated as your brand's mentions or earned media value, engagement, or content volume divided by the total for all tracked competitors in your category. A rising share of voice indicates your influencer program is successfully owning key conversations.

For B2B brands specifically, Share of Influence, or how much a brand is talked about by key influencers relative to competitors, may be an even more targeted metric than total Share of Voice.

5 The Metric That Predicts Revenue

Pipeline Influence measures the percentage of closed-won revenue traceable to influencer-generated touchpoints, not last-click attribution but multi-touch attribution that credits influencer content at any stage of the buyer journey.

The numbers are clear. LinkedIn creator content generates qualified leads at **\$84 per lead compared to \$127 for paid LinkedIn ads a 34% efficiency advantage**. Leads from creator content convert to closed deals at **31% higher rates** than leads from other digital channels. Deal sizes are **34% larger** when creator content influences the buying journey. Sales cycles are reduced by an average of **23% when prospects engage with creator content**, according to the LinkedIn B2B Institute (2026).

The average ROI for influencer marketing is **\$5.20–\$5.78 for every \$1** spent, with top-performing campaigns delivering **\$18–\$20 per dollar**, outperforming traditional digital advertising by up to **11 times**.

The correct KPI is not cost per lead; it is cost per influenced opportunity. Track which influencer posts, comments, or DMs preceded demo requests, proposal sends, and closed deals.



Activation: From Measurement to Pipeline

B2B brands allocate an average of \$250,000 annually to LinkedIn creator partnerships, compared to \$180,000 for Instagram influencer campaigns, according to Gartner Digital Markets (2025).

Contract lengths average 9.5 months for B2B influencer partnerships versus 3.2 months for consumer campaigns. B2B influencer marketing is not a campaign tactic; it is an always-on architecture for trust and pipeline.

6 After the Campaign: Go ABM Mode

The LAF Method treats the post-campaign phase as a structured workflow:

Day 1–3: Export all high-intent signals saved from target job titles, DMs from decision-makers, and profile visits from multiple stakeholders. Segment accounts by signal strength.

Day 4–7: Launch retargeting campaigns on LinkedIn and programmatic display targeting only accounts with repeated engagement. Use custom audiences built from profile visitors and engagers.

Day 8–14: Sales outreach to high-intent individuals who DM'd, requested a demo, or downloaded a gated asset. Personalize messaging referencing the specific influencer content they engaged with.

Day 15–30: Run account-based email and LinkedIn InMail sequences targeting accounts where multiple stakeholders engaged but no individual raised their hand. Focus on the business case, not the product.

Day 30+: Measure closed-won influenced by the campaign. Feed this data back into your influencer selection and content strategy for the next cycle.



Most B2B brands stop once the campaign is live. They report impressions, celebrate the engagement, and move on. This is a mistake.

Once the campaign has generated signals, your job shifts from broadcasting to activating. You are in ABM mode.

The final question after every campaign: which signals proved your assumptions, and which told you the campaign needed adjustment? If the wrong buyers reacted, what exactly are you scaling?

VIVEK DESAI

*Influence Performance Manager
Les Années Folles*



“

The ICP (Ideal Customer Profile) is your ideal customer on paper: the exact type of person you want to reach, including their role, company size, day-to-day challenges, and even the platforms they use most.

It's essentially a blueprint of your perfect client before you start outreach.

Why is it crucial in B2B influencer marketing?

Because if you don't know exactly who you're speaking to, you could end up choosing an influencer with 50K followers whose audience has little to no overlap with your actual target market.

In one sentence, the ICP is the compass behind effective influencer sourcing.

06



EXPERTS SPEAK NOTE

“

What defines a “successful post” for you today? (engagement quality, reach, inbound DMs, profile visits, follower growth, or something else?).

To me, a successful post is ultimately one that starts a conversation that goes beyond generic commentary and translates into a relationship. Whether that means I make a new friend or get a new client, it's a win either way..

What role does your LinkedIn content play in your ecosystem today? (Awareness, authority building, lead generation, partnerships, hiring, etc.)

My LinkedIn content these days covers all bases, from awareness to authority building to lead gen to partnerships. Every post serves a different purpose in the conversion funnel.

Do you notice differences in engagement quality or business intent depending on geography or market? Which regions convert better or show stronger intent in your opinion?

I work on an exclusively inbound basis at the moment. But I've found that the majority of people who engage with my content either never become clients or become clients much later down the line. In terms of the way I get clients, it's usually a matter of lurkers DMing or emailing me after seeing my content in their feeds for a while (at least that's what they tell me when they reach out!)



Marina Krivonossova

CEO @ Retold B2B
Marketing

“

How closely does your audience match the type of companies or people you want to attract? Where do you see the gap between audience size and audience relevance?

My audience is already highly aligned with the people I want to attract, mainly founders, operators, and decision-makers where positioning and growth truly matter. I create authentic, story-led content that builds trust and brings people along the journey, which naturally attracts the right clients while resonating with the next generation of founders and creators as well.

When someone engages with your content, how does it usually turn into something concrete?

It's rarely a linear process. Sometimes people read one post and reach out immediately, while others build trust over time by consistently engaging with my content and understanding how I think. My personal brand helps create aligned conversations naturally, turning trust into opportunities, collaborations, and clients over time.

In your experience, what truly makes a brand collaboration successful? (Audience match, positioning, execution quality, offer/message, etc.)

I've worked on both the creator and management side, so I've seen that the best partnerships come from genuine alignment between the brand, the creator, and the audience. I only collaborate with brands that truly match my values and audience interests, because trust always comes first. The strongest collaborations happen when brands give creators strategic freedom to communicate authentically rather than over-controlling the message.



Karla McNeilage

Strategic Partner to
Founders & C-Suite Leaders
Co-founder CNNCTD

“AI does not reward the loudest voice; **it rewards the most consistent one.**”

A brand that regularly appears in creator content, community conversations, and editorial publications builds what I call a “trust footprint” that AI models gradually learn to associate with authority on a given topic.



BENEDIKT BAECKER

*Marketing & Communication
Manager Stellar*

CONCLUSION

The 2026 B2B marketing landscape has settled a long-standing debate. Advertising and influencer marketing are not substitutes. They are complements operating at different layers of the trust stack. Advertising delivers scalable distribution, priming audiences, retargeting known prospects, and maintaining visibility across long cycles. Influencer marketing provides trust transfer, deepening conviction, tipping stalled evaluations, and reducing uncertainty inside buying committees.

The sharpest B2B marketers have stopped asking which channel works better. They are designing architectures where both operate simultaneously, each reinforcing a different stage of the same decision process. The decision is not whether to use advertising or influencer marketing. It is whether your objective is to distribute a message across a defined set of accounts or to ensure that message is interpreted as credible inside a multi-stakeholder buying committee.

The formats that win on LinkedIn in 2026 are not the ones with the highest production value. Carousels dominate because they earn dwell time. Video retains trust value but suffers from oversupply. Text-only posts perform when they deliver specificity and contrarian takes. The common thread across all high-performing B2B content is the person, not the brand. Employee posts receive twice the engagement of corporate page posts because professional audiences extend trust to people before they extend it to organizations.

The case studies in this ebook, Onepage, HubSpot, CEGID, and Lefebvre Dalloz, demonstrate a consistent pattern. International scalability on LinkedIn is not a question of budget or translation. It is a question of architecture and local intelligence. Centralize the strategy. Localize the credibility. The CTA defines the campaign's commercial value. Without it, content generates awareness. With it, content generates a pipeline.

In 2026, B2B buyers on LinkedIn are more sophisticated, more skeptical, and more demanding of genuine value than at any point in the platform's history. The brands that will win are not the ones with the biggest budgets or the most posts. They are the ones with the clearest strategy: expert voices, human formats, always-on presence, precision distribution and at the end of every carefully constructed content experience, a CTA worthy of the trust they have spent building.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Meet the Global Team Les Années Folles is the first B2B influence agency.

We are a team of strategists, data analysts, and creator partners operating across France, Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Our mission is to build trust architectures that turn LinkedIn from a publishing platform into a pipeline engine.

Final CTA The brands winning on LinkedIn in 2026 are not the ones publishing the most posts. They are the ones whose voices are everywhere in a listener's earbuds during the commute, in a live chat at ten in the morning, in a saved webinar replay at eleven at night. That omnipresence is not accidental. It is engineered.

Follow our podcast for monthly breakdowns of B2B creator strategies and platform algorithm changes.

Subscribe to the newsletter for benchmark data, case study deep dives, and the LAF Method playbook updates.

Book a strategic audit with Les Années Folles to map your brand's influencer opportunity, identify the right creators for your ICP, and build the production system that makes authority scalable.

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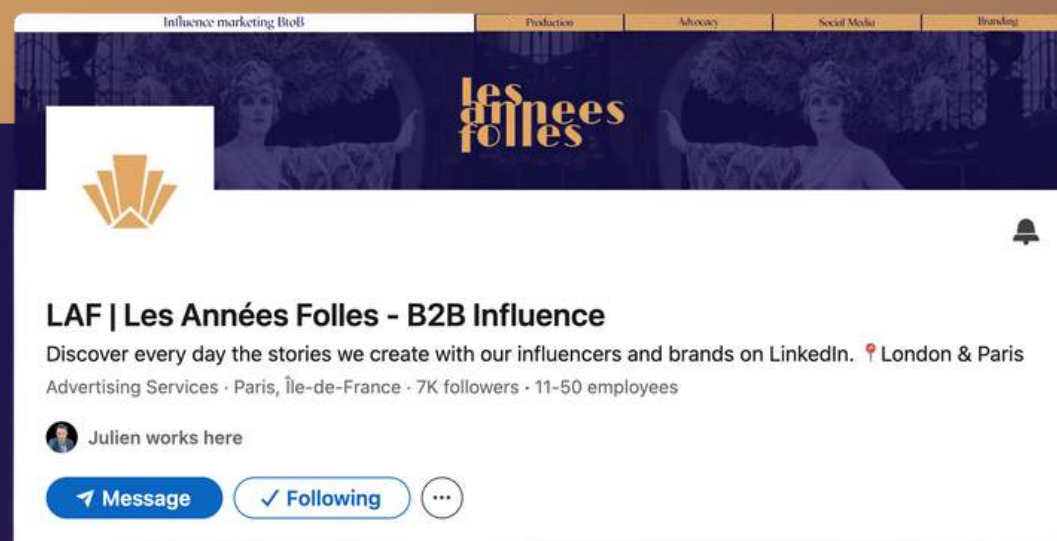
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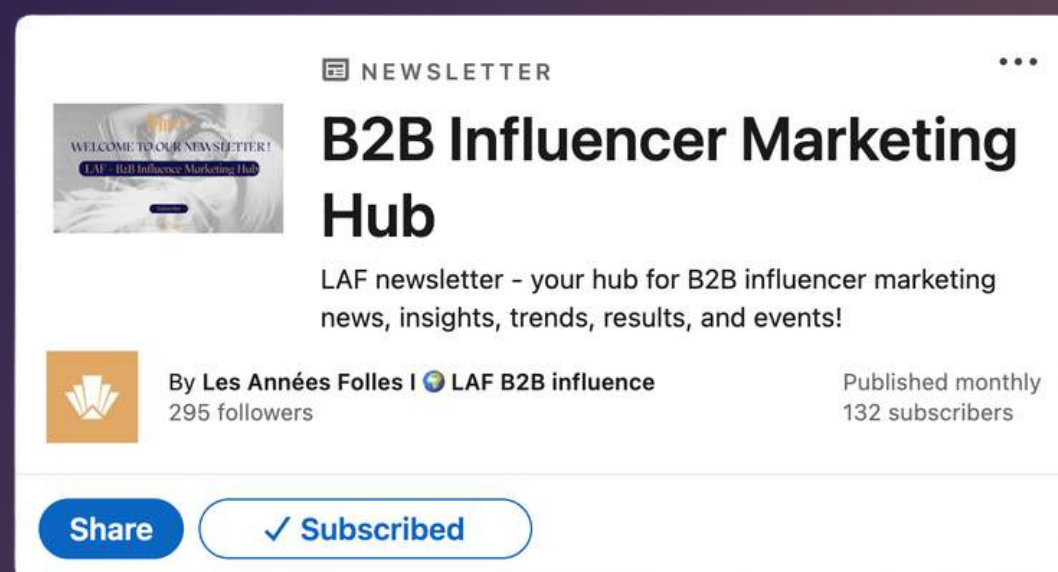
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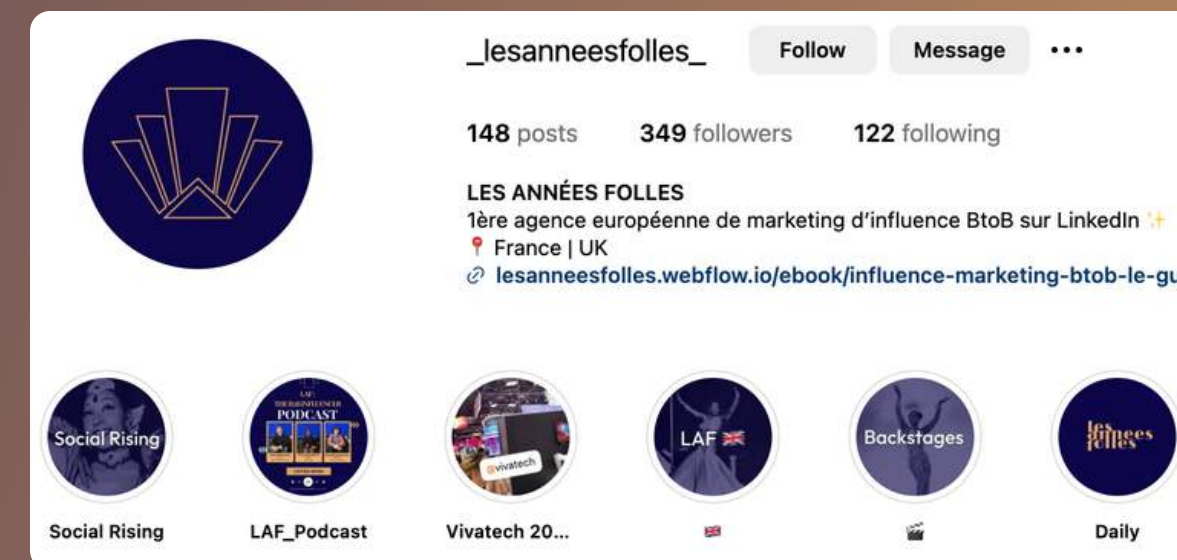
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