



What We Learned at Willow After Sharing 180 Posts About Our Case Studies in One Month

This report covers what we learned at Willow after running an experiment on LinkedIn using posts built around our case studies. Throughout October, **nine people on our team shared 180 posts in different formats** to see what actually works. We wanted to understand which styles get the most views, engagement, and followers, but also what we could achieve as a team in terms of total impressions.

The results were clear. Posts from the first two weeks (6315 October) did much better than posts later in the month. Posts that started with a **story** performed better than anything promotional, and **shorter captions** typically reached more people. **Simple visuals and carousels**, tended to work well, although some of that might be because these formats were used mainly during the first two weeks. **Comments** made the biggest difference. Even one or two comments helped a post reach far more people.

Overall, the **best-performing posts were short, personal, and easy to follow**, combined with simple visuals and engagement beyond likes.

Willow is a social media management tool that combines social media planning, with a human social media coach and AI solutions for content creation.

Introduction

The purpose of this experiment was to understand how different content formats and posting behaviors affect reach and engagement across LinkedIn. We also wanted to learn how many people we could reach by quite literally "bombarding" the LinkedIn algorithm with our customer case studies. So for a period of four weeks, nine employees participated by posting about a case study on every weekday. Throughout this period in October, we tested variables such as links, captions, tagging, images, carousels, and recurring image templates (e.g., news reporter).

Our objectives:

- Identify drivers of LinkedIn impressions. Compare performance across
- formats and storytelling approaches. Generate actionable
- recommendations for future content strategies. Multiply the reach of
- our case studies compared to posts from the company account.

This dataset provides a controlled internal experiment where multiple people posted about the same 20 case studies but using varied formats, allowing for comparative analysis.

Methodology

Timeframe: 6 - 31 October

Participants: 9 profiles (Ludwig, Koen, Henrieke, Ali, Kjell, Brent, Floor, Farhan, Dante)

Total posts analyzed: 180

Data sources: LinkedIn post analytics (impressions, reach, engagement, follower growth) and Willow link tracking.

Key metrics:

- **Impressions:** total views Members reached: unique viewers
- **Engagement:** likes, comments, reposts, clicks
- **Link clicks:** website traffic from posts

Top post criteria: Firstly ranked by engagement. If top the 3 in terms of engagement, didn't align with the top 3 in terms of reach, the post with the highest reach was added to complete a top 4.

Limitations of this study

- Internal engagement (likes/comments from coworkers) declined sharply after week two.
- Some participants posted unrelated personal content in between, affecting algorithmic momentum.
- The final week contained many link posts during a period of low internal engagement.
- Novelty bias possible for first-week posts (carousels, first stories, first image templates)

Hypotheses

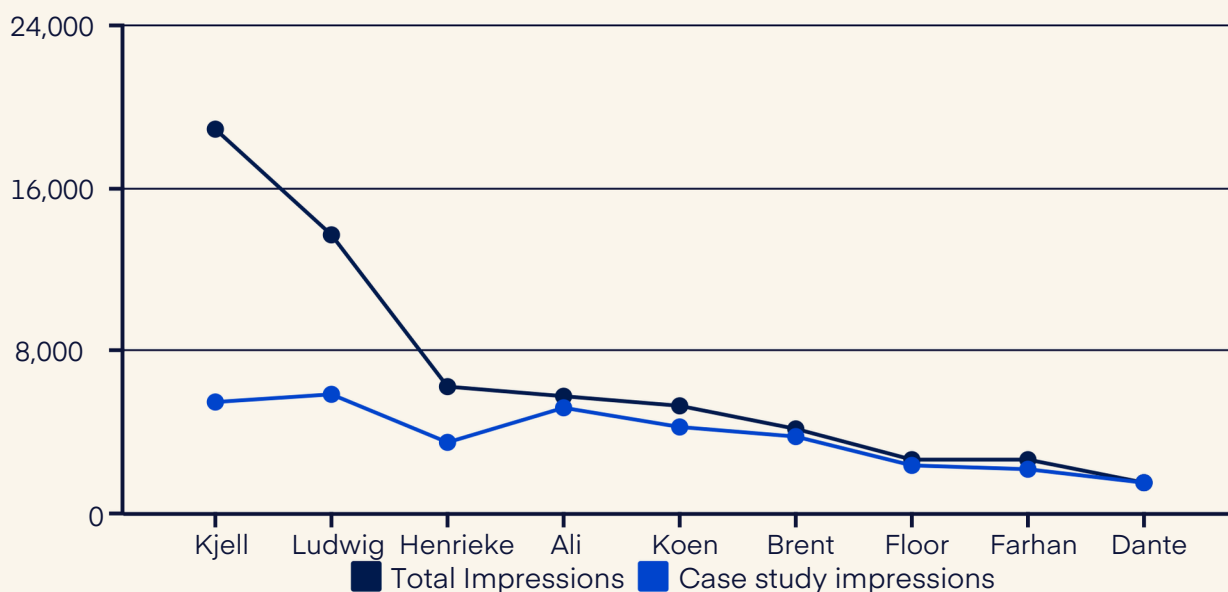
- 1 Personal LinkedIn profiles will generate significantly higher reach and engagement than the company's LinkedIn page.
- 2 Publishing many posts in a short time period will dramatically increase the visibility of Willow's case studies by appearing more often in people's feeds.
- 3 Since dwell time is important for reach, posts with more text and more elaborate images should lead to more impressions.

Results

Below is the raw data from the 180 posts about our case studies without interpretation. It's important to note that the total impressions, members reached and engagement take into account every post published between 6 and 31 October, also the one about non-related topics.

1. Impressions ranking

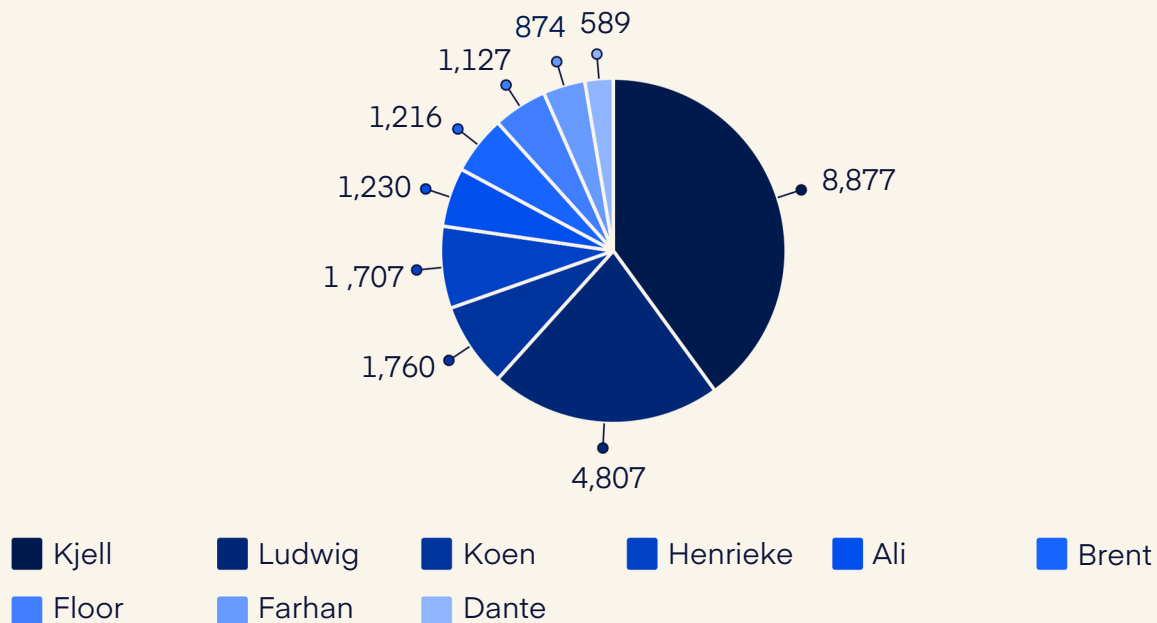
Total impressions reflect how often posts were displayed, giving a clear picture of overall visibility. The distribution shows two clear top performers, followed by a mid-range cluster and a low-reach group.



And then we have 2,045 case study impressions for Willow's company page

2. Members reached

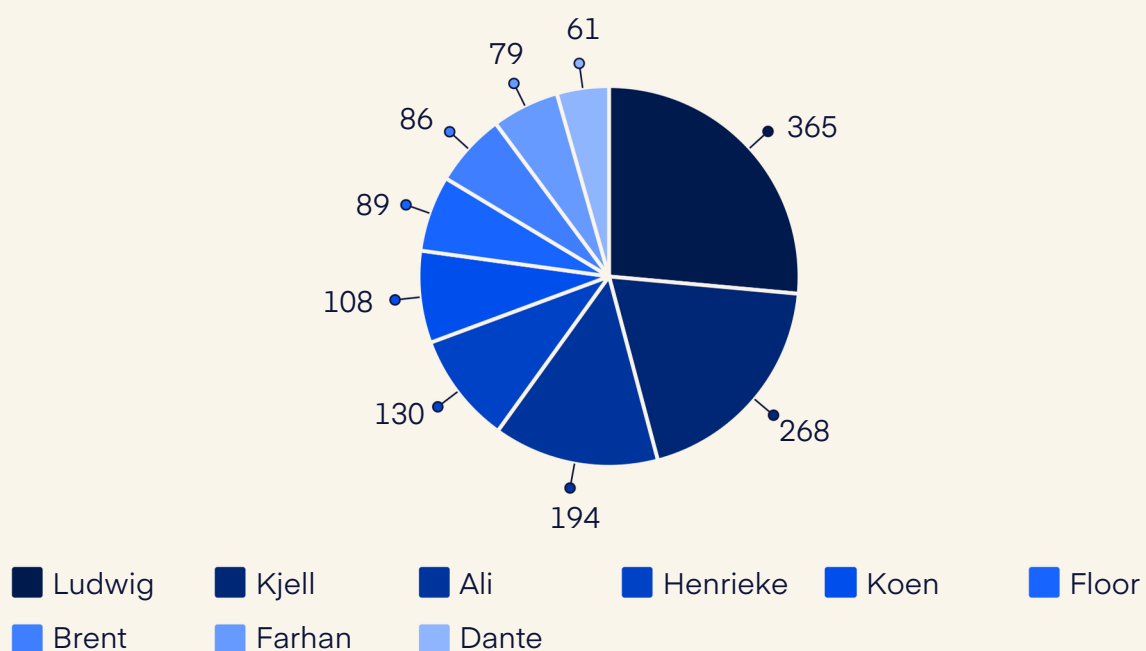
Unique reach indicates how many individual people saw the posts. The pattern mirrors the impressions ranking, with a strong top tier and a wider spread in the middle.



There's no data about how many people we reached from the company page.

3. Engagement totals

Engagement counts interactions such as likes, comments, reposts, and clicks. The results highlight a small number of highly engaged contributors, followed by a broader middle range. Across the 6 case study posts from the Willow page, there were a total of 562 engagements, including 46 likes, and 2 comments. Note that all 6 posts were carousels.



4. Top-performing posts per participant

Each participant had a small set of posts that significantly outperformed the others. These top posts commonly came from the first two weeks and share similar characteristics: story-first framing, simple visuals, and short text. More details about the posts in the Appendix.

Ludwig:

His strongest posts were concentrated in the first week. They used simple static visuals or text overlays, avoided links, and relied on direct storytelling or result-first framing.

Koen:

Performed best with short captions and clean image templates. His first news- reporter-style post delivered strong engagement relative to impressions.

Henrieke:

Her highest-performing posts were early carousels and text-on-image posts. She also posted one weekend update with surprisingly strong relative reach.

Ali:

His top posts had notably strong engagement, even when impressions were lower. They consistently started with personal or story-driven angles.

Kjell:

Mix of formats among his top posts, including a mini infographic with standout impressions and a short promotional post with a link that drove clicks.

Brent:

Performed best with early carousels and short text posts. Later posts dropped sharply in reach.

Farhan:

His highest-performing posts were simple story-first updates with clean imagery. Tagging and links did not play a major role.

Floor:

Her top post was her first carousel, with later results dropping significantly. A mid-month link post showed decent engagement but limited reach.

Dante:

Best results came from early story-first images, including the news-reporter format. Later posts showed strong declines.

5. Average impressions

Considering 9 people posted 20 times each, and the total number of impressions was 34,197, we can conclude that the **average number of impressions for personal posts was 190 impressions**. If we look at the **strongest performer**, Ludwig, the average impressions are **294 per post**. For the Willow company page, the average is 341 impressions per post.

6. Industry reach

Across the experiment, the majority of impressions came from three industries:

- IT Services and Consulting
- Business Consulting
- Software Development

Most participants reached a similar audience mix, reflecting the company's existing network and broader professional positioning. Floor was the only clear outlier, with her reach concentrated in the legal sector, likely driven by her personal network connections.

7. Format distribution

Participants used a diverse set of formats: carousels, images with only text, simple text-image combinations, the news reporter template, the billboard template, infographics, promotional graphics, text-only posts and link posts.

We also varied the text format between longer and shorter captions, where shorter captions were around 10 lines and the longer ones were at least double.

Furthermore, we experimented with including links and tagging the companies involved. About 40% of the posts included a link, while about 25% of the posts included a tag.

Analysis and key observations

This section explains both the quantitative drivers behind post performance and the qualitative patterns that emerged across the experiment. It integrates timing effects, format behaviour, engagement mechanics, network influence, and team activity to present a complete picture of why certain posts performed better than others.

Early posts dominated due to timing and internal momentum.

Posts published between **6 and 15 October** consistently delivered the highest impressions and engagement. This was driven by more **internal participation** during that period. As internal engagement weakened in later weeks, performance declined sharply, especially for link-heavy posts posted during the final days. However, we could also argue that there was some sort of **saturation**, that posts were competing for impressions and that the visuals were less attractive.

Story-first content clearly outperformed promotional posts.

Across the strongest posts, the majority shared the same structure: a **short personal narrative** or **human angle** at the start, a **clear result or insight**, and a **simple visual**. Posts that opened with promotional wording or results struggled to generate comments or extended reach.

Simple visuals outperformed complex designs.

Top-performing posts used **clean, readable visuals** such as: text overlays, simple color backgrounds, and straightforward carousels. More elaborate visuals such as graffiti walls, billboards and infographics, consistently underperformed.

Carousels performed well, but novelty likely influenced results.

Seven out of nine participants had a **carousel** in their top posts. Carousels are naturally engaging, but several factors could have inflated their performance: they were used as the first post, internal engagement was highest early on, and novelty and curiosity effects increased interaction.

Shorter captions delivered better reach.

The dataset shows a clear correlation between **shorter texts and more impressions**. While the majority of the posts had a longer format, a considerable part of the top posts consisted of short captions.

Comments were the strongest algorithmic driver of reach.

The single most important engagement type was comments. Posts with even one or two comments routinely outperformed posts with more likes but zero comments.

Tag usage had limited influence.

Tags were not a determining factor in post performance. Strong posts often had no tags, and weak posts occasionally had several. However, tags didn't harm reach and sometimes helped extend visibility to company or colleague networks.

Internal engagement dropped over time, reducing overall performance.

The strongest performances relied heavily on internal activity. As likes and comments from team members declined, the algorithm produced less reach for everyone. This was especially visible during the link-heavy final week, where posts struggled regardless of format.

Industry reach was consistent and aligned with the target audience.

Most profiles reached the same industries: IT services, software development, and business consulting. Floor was a notable exception, reaching legal industries due to her personal network. This reinforces a key pattern: personal network composition determines industry exposure more than post format, caption, or visuals.

Unrelated personal posts distorted performance patterns.

Posts outside the experiment achieved high reach for some individuals. These posts likely distorted the results for subsequent posts. On the one hand, high-performing posts could lead to higher visibility in the following days. On the other hand, two posts on the same day could be competing for attention, so it's hard to measure their impact.

Link performance was heavily dependent on engagement timing.

Link posts underperformed in the final week, but this was likely due to low internal engagement and other factors. Outside that window 6 of the 11 link posts appeared in the top 30. We could even argue that links had a positive influence on the reach. Nonetheless, **link clicks remained modest**. One top-performing post produced 7 link clicks. Some other posts registered between 1 and 3 clicks, leading to a total of between 2 and 5 link clicks visitors per participant.

Conclusions and recommendations

The experiment reveals a consistent set of patterns that explain why some posts performed better than others and what drives visibility on LinkedIn. The results show that performance was shaped by storytelling, simplicity, internal engagement, and comment activity more than by including link or tagging behaviour.

So what does this say about our hypotheses?

Hypothesis 1: Personal LinkedIn profiles will generate significantly higher reach and engagement than the company's LinkedIn page.

While the best-performing personal posts clearly outperformed the best-performing company posts, we noticed that the average number of impressions is higher from the company page. So we can conclude that during this experiment, the personal LinkedIn profiles did not generate significantly higher reach and engagement than the company's LinkedIn page. However, we believe that the results would change if we posted less frequently from personal profiles taking into account the best practices of this study.

Hypothesis 2: Publishing many posts in a short time period will dramatically increase the visibility of Willow's case studies by appearing more often in people's feeds.

While the initial goal was to "bombard" the feed with case study posts, the data clearly showed that the reach declined dramatically towards the end of the experiment. While we did indeed reach an average of 1,700 extra impressions per case study, it's hard to call this a dramatic increase.

Hypothesis 3: Since dwell time is important for reach, posts with more text and more elaborate images should lead to more impressions.

Contrary to our belief, the experiment showed that simple images (and carousels) outperform more elaborate visuals such as infographics. Shorter texts were also more likely to reach a wider audience than long captions. While people need less time to read them, they are more likely to start reading since it's less overwhelming.

Recommendations following this experiment

Continue prioritizing story-first posts.

All top-performing posts across participants opened with a personal angle or short narrative, and this structure consistently produced higher impressions, engagement, and comments.

Keep captions short.

Shorter text correlated with higher impressions across all profiles.

Use simple images rather than complex designs.

The visualsthat worked were thenews reporter style, images with text overlay, text images, and straightforward carousels. Formats such as billboards, graffiti, and infographics attracted limited engagement, so simple, clean visuals should remain the default.

Prioritise comments above all other engagement types.

Comments were the clearest driver of reach, and posts with even one or two comments routinely outperformed posts with more likes but no comments.

Keep testing carousels but remain cautious about assuming they outperform other formats.

Seven out of nine carousels landed in the top three, but many were also first posts, which may have inflated results. Carousels are worth continuing, but extra reach and engagement aren't guaranteed.

Maintain consistent internal engagement throughout the month.

Internal participation dropped as the experiment progressed, and performance declined with it. Early likes and comments from colleagues remain essential for reach.

Reply to comments on every post.

Some posts received comments that went unanswered, which reduced the opportunity for additional algorithmic boosts and conversation-driven reach.

Include links when relevant, but set realistic expectations.

Link engagement was low, with only one top three post generating clicks. Link posts performed better before the final week, when engagement was higher. Links can still be included, but don't expect strong click-through without early interaction.

Engage more with each other's posts

A major missed opportunity was the lack of consistent cross-engagement; this had a measurable negative effect on impressions.

Appendix: top posts

Ludwig Dumont

Posting profile: 6 posts with links, 4 with tags, 20 total

Note: Best 4 posts are not related.

Top posts:

8 October — Photo with text overlay; case study as part of a story; not promotional
463 impressions · 14 engagements (2 comments) · No tags · No links
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7381633255680135168/>

10 October — Results upfront; first use of news reporter style
402 impressions · 14 engagements · No tags · No links
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7382311131497021440/>

6 October — Carousel; first post; company tagged
803 impressions · 13 engagements (1 repost) · No links
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7380897727099924480/>

Koen

Posting profile: 6 posts with links, 6 with tags, 20 total

Note: Best post is not related.

Top posts:

10 October — First time using news reporter; results upfront
364 impressions · 13 engagements (1 comment) · Company tagged · No links
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7382314044218707968/>

14 October — Short story; AI image; company tagged
501 impressions · 11 engagements (1 comment) · No links
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7383781294150959105/>

6 October — Carousel; super short text; first post; company tagged
487 impressions · 12 engagements · No links
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7380899495934324736/>

8 October — Information first; image with text overlay
377 impressions · 9 engagements (1 comment) · No links · No tags
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7381678085516992512/>

Henrieke

Posting profile: 5 posts with links, 2 with tags, 20 total

Note: Best post is not related.

Top posts:

6 October — First post; carousel; short text; company + person tagged

684 impressions · 10 engagements (1 comment)

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7380891938729771008/>

11 October (Saturday) — Text on image; part of a story

155 impressions (second in reach) · 9 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7382786163972972544/>

9 October — Text image with design

196 impressions · 7 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7382107281527787520/>

15 October — Willow analytics screenshot; starts with story

414 impressions · 7 engagements (1 link) · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7384122221864165377/>

Kjell

Posting profile: 7 posts with links, 5 with tags, 20 total

Note: Best 3 posts are not related.

Top posts:

28 October — Only link post; short sentences; promotional

552 impressions · 11 engagements (1 link) · Person tagged

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7388892060734476288/>

14 October — Mini infographic; shorter text; story-first

1206 impressions · 15 engagements (4 comments, 1 repost) · Link included

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7383758884626354176/>

7 October — Story-first; text-only image

202 impressions · 11 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7381230927915409408/>

15 October — Times Square billboard; story-first

758 impressions · 7 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7384108774816579584/>

Farhan

Posting profile: 5 posts with links, 3 with tags, 20 total

Note: Best impressions post is not related.

Top posts:

8 October — Image with text overlay; story-first

153 impressions · 12 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7381578680638226432/>

15 October — Text image with visual background; story-first; Willow + company tagged

205 impressions (highest) · 6 engagements · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7384196223676755968/>

6 October — Carousel; short text; promotional; company tagged

175 impressions · 6 engagements · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7380971748374056961/>

Floor

Posting profile: 7 posts with links, 4 with tags, 20 total

Top posts:

11 October (Saturday) — Simple text on image; story-first; lots of whitespace

79 impressions · 8 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7382660871522553856/>

6 October — Carousel; first post; company tagged

497 impressions · 8 engagements · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7380920377168015360/>

16 October — No image; link + text; company tagged

321 impressions · 8 engagements (1 repost)

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7384566059103629312/>

Ali

Posting profile: 5 posts with links, 3 with tags, 20 total

Note: Best engagement post is not related.

Top posts:

8 October — Image with text overlay; story-first

366 impressions · 18 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7381640633511350272/>

9 October — Text with visual background; story-first

270 impressions · 12 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7382031997801504768/>

15 October — Text image with visual background; personal tone

594 impressions (highest of month) · 10 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7384114753553604608/>

Dante

Posting profile: 8 posts with links, 2 with tags, 20 total

Top posts:

8 October — Image with text overlay; story-first

156 impressions · 11 engagements (2 comments) · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7381569655531786240/>

6 October — Carousel; quote; company tagged

106 impressions · 7 engagements (1 comment) · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7380922145322876928/>

10 October — News reporter; company tagged

147 impressions · 7 engagements (1 repost) · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7382319236045492224/>

24 October — News reporter; short sentences

145 impressions · 2 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7387419223616065536/>

Brent

Posting profile: 7 posts with links, 2 with tags, 20 total

Top posts:

6 October — First post; shorter text; carousel; company + person tagged

417 impressions · 13 engagements (1 comment, 1 link)

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7380889658307817472/>

10 October — Text image; shorter text; story-first

195 impressions · 12 engagements · No tags · No links

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7382315356620742657/>

14 October — Infographic + link

137 impressions · 7 engagements · Link included · No tags

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7383762694543286272/>

15 October — No image; link + text; company tagged

396 impressions · 5 engagements (1 repost)

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7384203662929321984/>