What’s Next For LinkedIn?

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Fast growth in key international markets

On May 19, LinkedIn became the first US social network to go public, leading the way for future social media IPOs. As the media focus on the company's valuation and its implications on the financial markets, LinkedIn continues its day job as an important venue for marketers.

With more than 100 million current members, LinkedIn saw about 0.51% of all site visits to social networks in December 2010, according to Experian Hitwise.

Around 25 million US internet users visit the site each month, comScore reports, and while they donâ€™t log in as frequently as Facebook users, they are active in ways important to social media marketers, avidly joining and posting to groups.

LinkedInâ€™s nature as a professionally oriented networking site also gives it a value boost for marketers. Users tend to be willing to provide more personal information about themselves than on general social networking sites like Facebook, leading to greater possibilities for targeted marketing.

At Efficient Frontierâ€™s Social Upfront event in May, Steve Patrizi, vice president of sales for LinkedInâ€™s marketing solution business, noted this point. â€œMarketers are running the same creative on LinkedIn, but it is very targeted thanks to the provided information, and these marketers are successful,â€• he said.

He cited a successful HP campaign targeting small-business owners as an example.

The site has also spent a lot of time in the past year launching new services for its users and advertisers, such as LinkedIn Today and Company Pages.

LinkedIn also has a major presence in up-and-coming international markets that many advertisers are keen to reach. In March 2011, leading up to the eighth anniversary of its launch, LinkedIn released updated statistics about the site and its usage.

The data showed that India is the largest source of members outside the US, with 9 million members, followed by Brazil and Canada, both at 3 million. Brazil is the fastest-growing source country of new users, with 428% year-over-year growth in membership in 2010.

With companies, marketers and other businesspeople focusing on BRIC countries as a growth strategy, the fact that LinkedIn has a solid and expanding footprint there bodes well. As it navigates through new, public waters, international growth will be key to LinkedIn's success.

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