

Agile, member-first insight accelerates product innovation

How LinkedIn's product organization involves members across the entire product development process, to de-risk decisions and build the right products with the right product-market fit

Member-first is a company-wide mandate from Jeff Weiner, LinkedIn's CEO, that permeates from his office throughout the organization. The research team needed a scalable and agile way to gather member feedback, inform product development and build on what they already knew from their behavioral data. Having ongoing, agile access to member input through their multiple communities has revolutionized the way they do research at LinkedIn. They're able to support their entire product organization to improve members' experience, drive innovation and revenue and reduce the risk of making the wrong decision.

Challenge

With a members first mandate, the research team had a critical role to play in building empathy for the customer experience and bringing agile insights back to inform the product development process. Traditional research methods were too slow and taking months to conduct. Their masses of behavioral data on users didn't tell them the reasons behind the behavior, leaving many unanswered questions.



We learn about what customers want and feed that back to our product development teams to answer specific customer pain points.



Alexandra Cristea
Product Marketing Manager
LinkedIn

600% increase in monthly research activities

Drove premium membership conversion

Informed the redesign of linkedin.com

Democratized member insight to de-risk decisions across LinkedIn

Solution

Today the insight and product marketing teams work in lockstep with the rest of the organization to build the right products and ensure the right product-market fit.

Insight communities at LinkedIn have evolved from one small community in 2016 to eight in 2018 which support their growth engine across four categories: hiring, sales and marketing, premium as well as their expansion into global markets.

To scale the almost daily activities and needs of the large product organization, including product marketing, product management, engineering and UX, the research team operates as subject matter experts and have revolutionized the research process. They prioritize the work, ensure the right questions get asked of the right audience and nurture members with a positive, engaging experience because they see feedback as an important piece in a member's journey with the brand. To put product marketing team even closer to the member's voice they thirst for, the product marketers do their own analysis, digging into open-ended responses, moderating discussions and drawing their own conclusions. The research team reviews reports to ensure the analysis is sound.

The team also operate an internal wiki for community best practices, use cases and prior studies. And they maintain templates for questions and types of studies they run frequently so they don't have to reinvent the wheel each time they start a project.

When it was time to revamp LinkedIn's desktop experience for the first time in 10 years, they engaged members from the very beginning. LinkedIn needed to de-risk decisions and make sure they were on the right path for an exceptional member experience. They dug into how members feel about core elements of the experience including job, profile, feed, messaging, notifications and network by interacting with smaller groups and then weaving the results together into a collection of insight. Members of each group evaluated early prototypes of the new desktop experience and offered feedback. The result is a cleaner and user friendly desktop experience that aligns with the company's mobile experience.

The connection to behavioral data helps the team serve up studies based on what they already know about members. For example, reaching out to members who haven't posted a profile photo or only access one area of the site on a regular basis. Asking relevant questions of the right people builds engagement and supports the members first principle.



Vision Critical has changed the way our stakeholders view market research. With our insight communities, we involve themember in the entire product development cycle, from idea generation to design to validation. The insight of our members allows us to understand the 'whys' behind the 'whats' that Big Data gives us. It provides intelligence at the speed required by the fast-moving tech industry. There isn't another tool in our toolbox that deliversthe same credibility and agility for our stakeholders.



Tony Tong
Senior Market
Research Manager
LinkedIn

