MEMBER GUIDE 06 · FREE TO READ, MEMBER OR NOT

LinkedIn for retailers

Mostly useful for supplier and brand relationships rather than customers. Worth knowing which, before you spend time on it.

The short version

LinkedIn is a trade channel, not a shop window. Almost nobody has ever bought a pair of loudspeakers because they saw them on LinkedIn, and if you go in expecting customers you will conclude within a month that the whole thing is a waste of time.

But the people who decide which dealers get the new launch, the demonstration stock, the training day and the marketing support are on it, and a good number of them are paying attention. That is the reason to bother, and it is the only reason to bother.

> **IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE**
>
> Put the effort into **your own profile**, not the shop's page. Post about **the work** rather than the products. Budget **twenty minutes a week** and no more. Judge it on **conversations started**, never on likes. And if six months of that produces nothing, stop — the time is better spent on guide 01.

Why it is not a customer channel

People arrive on LinkedIn in work mode. They are hiring, job-hunting, chasing a supplier or avoiding a spreadsheet. They are not in the frame of mind that precedes a four-figure purchase for the living room, and a demonstration is not a thing anyone books from a work account on a Tuesday afternoon.

Your actual customers find you somewhere else entirely: a local search, a forum thread, a YouTube review, or a recommendation from someone who has already been in. If getting more customers is the job in front of you, guide 01 is the one to read — local search is the highest-return thing most independent shops can fix, and this is not.

What it is genuinely good for

— **Brand and distributor relationships.** Area sales managers, brand managers and distribution directors are heavy users. Being a name they recognise before you ask for something is worth more than any post you will ever write.

— **Being visible when a brand is choosing dealers.** When a manufacturer is deciding who gets an account or a launch, somebody looks you up. What they find should suggest a serious shop that knows what it is doing.

— **Knowing when people move.** Your area sales manager changing job is useful intelligence, and LinkedIn tells you before the distributor does.

— **Recruitment.** Hiring in specialist retail is genuinely hard, and this is one of the few places the right person might be looking.

— **The trade press.** Editors and freelancers use it to find people to quote. Being quotable is free coverage.

Your profile, or the shop's page?

In a business your size the personal profile does nearly all of the work. People connect with people, posts from a named human reach further than posts from a logo, and the relationships you are trying to build are with individuals rather than with brands.

Have a company page — it costs nothing and its absence looks odd — but do not pour effort into it. Fill in the description, the address, the website and a decent photograph of the shop, then leave it alone.

> **CLAIM THE SHORT ADDRESS**
>
> A company page whose address is a string of digits is the sign of one nobody has finished. Setting a proper name takes a minute in the page settings, it is free, and it makes every link you ever share look deliberate.

Worth getting right on your own profile

— A headline that says what you do and where, not a job title on its own. "Specialist hi-fi retailer, Norwich" beats "Managing Director".

— A photograph of your face. Not the logo, not the shop front, not a turntable.

— A banner image of the demonstration room, which is the single most persuasive thing you own and the thing most shops leave as the default blue. Guide 04 covers how to take it.

— A few sentences on the business: how long, what you sell, what you actually do for people. Write it as you would say it.

— A link to the shop's website. Check once a year that it still works.

What to post

Five things that reliably earn a reaction from the trade:

01 **The job itself.** An awkward install, a room problem solved, a repair that came good. This is the most interesting thing you do and the most under-posted.

02 **Anything you have actually measured.** Real numbers from a real shop are rare enough that people stop for them.

03 **Staff and training.** Somebody passing a course, a brand day, a new starter. Manufacturers like seeing their training being used.

04 **An honest trade opinion.** Politely put, about something that matters — margins, delivery, minimum advertised pricing, the state of the high street.

05 **Events.** Before, so people can come; after, with a photograph of a room containing actual human beings.

What to leave alone

— Manufacturer press releases reposted word for word. Everyone in the feed has already seen it four times, and it reads as though nobody was in.

— "Delighted to announce."

— Motivational business waffle. There is a great deal of it on LinkedIn and none of it has ever sold an amplifier.

— Posts with more hashtags than sentences. LinkedIn is not Instagram, and the tags do very little here — guide 03 covers where they do matter.

— Anything that reads as though it was written by a machine, because most of the feed now is, and the contrast works strongly in your favour.

> **ON FREQUENCY**
>
> Once a fortnight, kept up for a year, beats every day for three weeks and then silence. The people you are trying to reach are not counting your posts — they are forming a vague impression of whether you are still there and still any good. That impression survives a quiet month. It does not survive a two-year gap.

The twenty-minute week

This is the whole discipline, and it fits in the gap between the shop being tidied and the lights going off.

— **Five minutes.** Read the feed. Leave three or four comments that say something — a comment with a thought in it does more for you than a post, and takes a fraction of the time.

— **Ten minutes.** Write one post. A photograph from the week and three or four sentences about it is a complete post. It does not need an essay.

— **Five minutes.** Accept the sensible connection requests, and send two or three of your own to people you have actually dealt with — with a line saying where you met.

That is it. Anyone telling you a small shop needs a content calendar and a posting schedule is selling something.

Things that will cost you

— **Automated messaging tools.** They are obvious to the recipient, they annoy exactly the people you are courting, and they put your account at risk.

— **Buying connections or followers.** Visible, pointless, and embarrassing when noticed.

— **Connecting and immediately pitching.** The fastest way to be remembered badly by somebody whose goodwill you will want in eighteen months.

— **Arguing publicly with a brand or a distributor.** Whatever the merits, it is read by every other brand as a warning. Pick up the telephone.

— **Posting prices, or anything that reads as undercutting.** Your suppliers are in the audience, and so are the other members.

Whether it is working

The numbers LinkedIn shows you are mostly not the point. Impressions and followers measure the platform's enthusiasm for showing your post, not your standing in the trade.

Signals that mean something

— A brand or distributor approaches you rather than the other way round.

— An area sales manager already knows who you are on the first visit.

— You are invited to a launch, a press day or a training session you were not on the list for before.

— Someone in the trade mentions a post to you in person. This happens far more often than the like count would suggest.

— A candidate applies who found you there.

None of those appear on a dashboard, which is precisely why they are worth watching. Keep a note in a diary. Five entries in six months is a channel doing its job for a cost of twenty minutes a week.

When to stop

If six months of honest effort produces no conversations, no inbound interest and nothing you would put in that diary, then LinkedIn is not working for your business, and that is a perfectly respectable finding. Leave the profile and the company page tidy and accurate — they will still be doing the checking-you-out job when a brand looks you up — and put the twenty minutes into local search instead.

The reverse also holds. If the trade relationships are the part of your business that most needs work — you cannot get the accounts you want, the good stock goes elsewhere, the launches happen without you — then this is one of the cheaper places to start, and the annual conference is the other.

ALSO IN THIS SERIES

01 Getting found locally — the customer-facing job this guide deliberately does not do, and the highest-return fix for most independent shops.

03 Reels, hashtags and music — the platform where the tags and the audio rules actually bite.

All seven guides are free to read, member or not, at the Clarity guides page.

Clarity Alliance — the British hi-fi industry trade association. The guides are free because nobody joins a trade association for a PDF. They are the argument, not the product. Membership is sold on the card rates, the standard, the conference and Bira.