



İlkyay Özkısaoğlu

„Companies need to empower their employees to use LinkedIn well“

İlkyay Özkısaoğlu is one of the leading German-speaking voices in the LinkedIn network. A conversation about B2B content creation, reach and algorithms.

PRO Converting: Mr Özkısaoğlu, how do you actually become a „Social CEO“?

İlkyay Özkısaoğlu: In 2008, I signed up for LinkedIn based on a tip from a former colleague in the USA. At that time, LinkedIn was merely a CV portal. You only entered your CV stations. I did that in a rudimentary way and just had a look around. There was already a feed back then, but it was very boring. I then started my own business in 2015, but even then, LinkedIn wasn't that important to me. I supported international companies in their business development, especially in the Middle East, but also in Turkey.

PRO Converting: And then you had your big key experience ...

İ. Özkısaoğlu: In mid-2018, I had a wonderful composite solution that I wanted to sell. I read about a new edition of the BMW 7 Series in a magazine, where they wanted to make the spar from a lightweight composite – just right for my product! So, I simply called BMW and said I had a solution and would like to speak to the developer. I've been working in sales for 22 years. I have all the tricks to get past reception. But I still got a rebuff. Finally, LinkedIn popped into my head. I thought BMW is an international consortium and the employees there, I'll just categorise them as „career people“, so they must have a profile on LinkedIn. Lo and behold, I came across some really interesting professionals. Of course, it's not so easy to decipher the department abbreviations and so on, but I wrote to one or two of them – and received the corresponding answers. The fact that the spar in the BMW 7 Series was already fully developed and that the magazines had not yet been told is another matter!

PRO Converting: If you want something sensible, you will get an answer on LinkedIn!

İ. Özkısaoğlu: Exactly that! I realised at the time that the feed had changed completely. Suddenly I saw videos, live streams, photo posts – a really cool content hub! Now I'm not so much into the meta-marketing topics that were shown to me there, but part of the „old economy“ – in my case, composite materials. So I thought to myself, how can I transfer this system, which is used by the big corporate influencers, to the industry? And the great thing about LinkedIn is that the whole world is at your feet. So, I took six months to search LinkedIn from the USA to Europe, the oil-rich countries of the Middle East and down under. I didn't find anyone, and I mean anyone, who was producing truly appealing content in the industry. And then it was clear to me that I would get involved.

PRO Converting: Today, LinkedIn has reached a level where nobody can afford not to be there.

İ. Özkısaoğlu: Of course, I say, you can't afford not to. But there are different personalities. Some people like to show themselves in public and some people don't like to show themselves in public. One of the main reasons is FOPO, „Fear of People's Opinion“, i.e. the fear of being judged by other people.

PRO Converting: In your consultancy, you focus fully on personal LinkedIn pages and less on company pages. Why is that?

İ. Özkısaoğlu: That is the basic consensus that we all have to reach: The company page on LinkedIn has no reach per se. LinkedIn wants to earn money with the company page by asking companies to place ads. And if they create an event, then this event should be sponsored. The reach is achieved by the people, the employees, the boss, the C-level. LinkedIn is very generous and theoretically grants these people unlimited reach, provided they do it well. The post should have a certain originality. A LinkedIn post that is posted from a personal profile has a half-life of 18 hours. Companies must therefore ensure that they enable their employees to make good use of LinkedIn – as content creators or corporate influencers – by providing them with appropriate social guidelines. The boss should also be active!

PRO Converting: We are currently experiencing a real boom on LinkedIn. But what about the quality of the posts? Can we expect the euphoria to die down?

İ. Özkısaoğlu: There are currently 22 million active members in the DACH region. When I signed up in 2008, there were one million. There's still room for improvement! Worldwide, LinkedIn has now cracked the billion mark. However, this platform also has to contend with hackers, fake accounts and dubious zero-follower profiles.

PRO Converting: It is noticeable that LinkedIn is increasingly being used as a platform for expressing political opinions. With corresponding risks and side effects?

İ. Özkısaoğlu: LinkedIn's vision and mission is „Connecting the Global Workforce for the Economic Advantage of Each Member.“ So, it's clearly about the working population, not about forming political opinions. The algorithm is not there to spread any political information. Of course, I'm also familiar with posts that bash political parties or question the government. But a current or future employer can also read all of this. Of course, a certain amount of personal branding also plays a role. How do I want others to perceive me? Do I want to take a stand on certain issues and have a positive impact on society as a thought leader? Or do I want to behave like the bull in the china shop? I always tell my clients that there are three taboo topics on LinkedIn: Sex, religion and politics.

PRO Converting: Thank you very much for the interview!