

**AWARD: MARKETING SOCIETY** 

**BRAND:** LinkedIn UK

CATEGORY: BRAND COMMUNICATION SMALL (BUDGET < £5M)

# **LinkedIn Makes Work Work for Women**

How We Shed Outdated Perceptions to Improve Work for Women & Build Brand Equity







Brand: LinkedIn

Category: Brand Communication (Small - under £5m)
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Contributors: Tim Clancy, Zara Easton (LinkedIn)



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## **Executive Summary**

Putting women at the forefront of its brand purpose and its communication has proven to be both the good and the right thing to do for LinkedIn. With many shying away from the platform due to 'old-school' and sometimes alienating views of the brand, activating around an ethos of 'making work work for women' has helped LinkedIn openly challenge these brand perceptions and position itself as a driver of change in the workplace.

After the announcement early in 2022 of its first ever sponsorship of the Women's Euros, LinkedIn set about a series of campaigns aimed at genuinely improving the lives and career prospects of professional women. From championing flexible working; inviting members to find their space on the platform so that they could learn and grow from each other; or showcasing remarkable, unsung female football talent as inspirational role-models, the brand invited women to 'belong' on LinkedIn - a key driver of visitation intent and consequent usage of the platform - and brought many others along with them.



Is the challenge over yet? Certainly not. Have we made a step in the right direction? Absolutely. LinkedIn will continue to champion women and all who need someone to fight their corner in the ever-evolving world of modern professionalism.

<sup>1</sup> PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS CONFIDENTIAL/ JUDGES' EYES ONL



Word Count: 286

## Changing the perception that only the few have a place at the table

Imagine it's the 60s. You're in an office, sitting at a boardroom table. Who do you think you'd see? Men? Older men. Are they white? Ah-hmm. Corporate? Definitely. Fast forward to 2022: the world of work has changed immeasurably over the years - more inclusive and open-minded around gender, race, sexual orientation, disability - yet some working spaces still feel uncomfortably "old-school".

This is a real problem for LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network: despite being a platform with every permutation of 'professional' signed up, it is seen as being dominated by a certain 'type' of professional ( $\stackrel{\triangleleft}{\triangleleft}$ ), alienating those who don't fit this bill<sup>2</sup>.



And if you don't feel like you have a place on the platform, you're less likely to want to spend time there3.

"A lot of people blowing their own trumpets and a lot of people I don't know and have never met trying to "connect" with me."4

This is true for many but especially for women, who spend less meaningful time on LinkedIn - i.e. less time visiting/ posting/ liking/ commenting/ scrolling/ applying (you get the idea) - despite there being nearly as many female members than men<sup>5</sup>.

This matters because women are disproportionately impacted at work by gender-based biases, pay gaps and more<sup>6</sup>. And while LinkedIn has the **potential** to help make things better for them through its vibrant community & knowledge base, this perception barrier gets in the way, exacerbating decades' old workplace biases.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> LinkedIn Brand Strategy Research, 2021

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Perceptual Drivers' Analysis, LinkedIn International Brand Drivers Analysis, March 2022 <sup>4</sup>VCCP Internal Survey, 2021

 $<sup>^{5}</sup>$  Men make up 56% of LinkedIn's members in the UK and use the platform more frequently than women do

https://www.epi.org/publication/womens-work-and-the-gender-pay-gap-how-discrimination-societal-norms-and-other-forces-affect-womens-occupational-choices-and-their-pay/, https://builtin.com/diversity-inclusion/gender-bias-in-the-workplace



## Making work work for all

(What was your desired outcome?)

Globally, LinkedIn has committed to making societal change, with an ambitious but necessary vision: "To create opportunity for every member of the workforce."

When half of the world's population faces daily barriers in their careers on the platform itself<sup>7</sup>, taking a clear stand to 'make work work for women's, both on and off the platform is not just necessary, it is a responsibility. A stake in the ground to improve women's experiences of the platform while also mitigating negative perceptions of the brand.

We know from LinkedIn's Drivers' Analysis<sup>9</sup> that increasing the extent to which people feel like they 'belong' on LinkedIn drives visitation and engagement on the platform. Greater engagement on LinkedIn creates more opportunities to connect, learn, share and - sometimes - to get hired. A win-win for all.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Recruiters are 13% less likely to click on a woman's profile when they show up in search on LinkedIn

<sup>8</sup>Linkedin has made an external commitment to create a more equitable world of work for women

LinkedIn International Brand Drivers Analysis, March 2022
 Weekly Active Users measures how many people are using LinkedIn on a weekly basis, whether simply logging in or performing a specific action - e.g. liking a post, commenting, sharing a post, reading an article. WAU is one way to understand how engaged our members are - if someone regularly logs in and uses LinkedInt, it is a good indication that they are an engaged member.



## **Embodying the brand's vision**

(How creative & innovative were you in your approach? Did you push boundaries? What did you do differently?)

LinkedIn kicked off 2022 with the announcement of its sponsorship of the Women's Euros, a first for the brand and a stake in the ground, signalling its commitment to women.

This set the tone for the year, where we would reveal a succession of campaigns championing women at work: International Women's Day (IWD), a mass brand campaign, and an activation of its Women's EURO Sponsorship.

Our overarching strategic way in was rooted in the human desire to help support each other, and the brand's core strength - being a community with the power to nurture potential. 'We Make Each Other Better' would be the red thread that embodied the best of LinkedIn. But we would flex this to be more specific for our IWD and the Women's Euros campaigns:

### 1. Brand campaign: A Place for Every Type of Professional

With over 35m users in the UK, LinkedIn is brimming with a diverse group of professionals - different ages, backgrounds, levels of experience, career paths, interests, priorities and more. With this abundance of work experiences and insights, this is a professional community crying out to help individual members navigate their own life and work - there's always someone who has been there, done that and who is willing to share their story to help you navigate yours.

We wanted to make a virtue out of this professional breadth, showing the multiple ways in which you could "belong" on LinkedIn through an emotional storytelling-led, mass campaign, honing in on the most 'universal' areas of interest:

- What members cared about most, e.g. flexibility, family, travel
- Where they were in their careers, e.g. pondering a change or step-change in career
- What was most relevant to them, e.g. UK members care about work/life balance

To connect with the broadest number of people and enable them to see "LinkedIn is a place with all types of professionals like me", we would showcase working-parents, side-hustlers, digital nomads and students.

### 2. International Women's Day 2022: Making flexible work work

LinkedIn had already partnered with IWD in 2021, with a successful<sup>11</sup> campaign encouraging women to celebrate those who had supported them during Covid. IWD 2022 would provide another opportunity to talk directly to our audience through a meaningful, action-oriented campaign that would drive discussion on the platform once again.

For our springboard, we found that over half of working women had left or were considering leaving a job due to a lack of flexible working options<sup>12</sup>, particularly poignant after multiple lockdowns and enforced 'flexible' working. With IWD's theme of the year being #BreakTheBias, we realised that LinkedIn was in a good position to destigmatise flexible working, showcasing it not just as a 'perk for working-mums' but as a universal right with the potential to make work better for everyone<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>The platform saw record engagement on IWD 2021 <sup>12</sup> LinkedIn IWD Consumer & B2B Research Questionnaire, Dec 2021

<sup>13</sup> Covid had facilitated a large-scale shift toward more flexible ways of working but many firms had already started backtracking by early 2022 & perceptions of it being primarily aimed at working mums remained



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#### 3. Activating the Women's EUROS 2022: It's easier to be what you can see

The Women's EUROS was forecast to be the biggest women's sporting event in Europe after being rescheduled due to Covid. To understand the role LinkedIn could play, we examined some of the issues that women faced in their careers. According to **Dr Ansary, UN Women Global Champion,** 

"Raising the visibility of women in every sphere of endeavor is <u>vital</u> to empowering women and achieving gender parity. It takes an accumulation of role models – real life examples of what girls and women can do if given the opportunity – to change entrenched attitudes."

Unsurprisingly, we found that **76% of female professionals said relatable role models needed to be more visible**<sup>14</sup>. Between LinkedIn's community and the professional female footballers we now had access to, we had a platform to showcase remarkable talent and achievements, and the collective power to spark meaningful conversations to drive change and break biases.

'It's easier to be what you can see' became the strategic springboard for the campaign - giving us the opportunity to highlight the importance of role models within all aspects of life, both on and off the pitch.

<u>Across all campaigns</u>, we would maximise our impact via a dual-pronged approach to comms that would:

a) **push** out messaging that create interest; and

b) *pull* our audiences onto the platform to engage in conversations, find information, inspiration and/or insights that would enhance their experience and ultimately, their careers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>LinkedIn's "<u>Gender Equity in the workplace</u>" report. It also indicated that 57% of professional women believe that having a relatable role model is crucial to achieving career success and 70% agreeing that it's easier to be like someone you can see.



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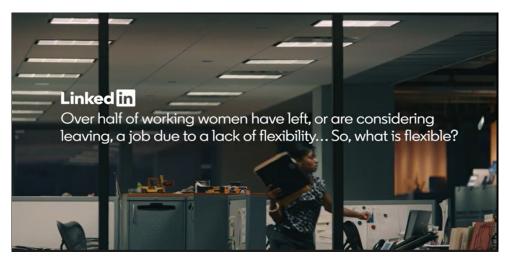
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## The Work (in order of roll-out vs strategic development)

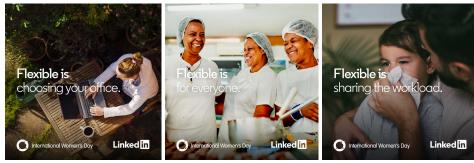
### 1. International Women's Day 2022: #FlexibleIs (21st April - 11th May 2022<sup>15</sup>)

**#FlexibleIs** was an integrated campaign that ran across the UK, France, Germany, India, and Australia, highlighting and driving conversation around flexible working, while showcasing the benefits for all. Our primary film **(aka "push" comms)** unveiled inspirational stories from across the globe, showcasing what flexibility truly meant to different people.





#FlexibleIs primary film



Executions showcasing different types of flexible working situations

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>The Russian invasion of Ukraine began on 24th February 2022, nearly 2 weeks before International Women's Day 2022. As a result, communication was shifted to start later - April 21st 2022 - which means that we were less likely to benefit from the scale of engagement on IWD itself.

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18NOTE: As an American organisation (owned by Microsoft), LinkedIn uses dollars across the board when measuring spend.



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**To "pull" people into** the conversation, our call to action was *'Join the Conversation on LinkedIn'*, where we brought together influencers, creators and the community to *'Share what #flexibleIs for you'* and how flexible working had supported their careers. This was intended to get more people onto the platform and engaged in the conversation.



The campaign's invitation to people to share their views on flexible working



Posts from members and creators using #FlexibleIs on LinkedIn

# 2. #Flexiblels was followed by our brand campaign with a female first focus: A Space for You (16th May - 30th June 2022)

Our UK brand campaign was called 'A Space for You', signalling that whoever or wherever you are in your careers, there's a space for you to belong on LinkedIn. This was brought to life via a table - a *simple and easy to understand visual metaphor for the platform.* 



Still from 'A Space for You" Brand Film

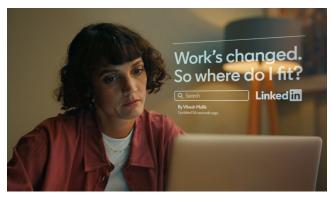


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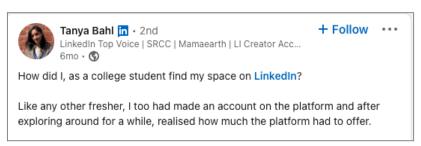
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The primary asset was a film which follows a female protagonist who starts off feeling overwhelmed and questioning her career. She is surprised by another woman, who sits down at her table, looking at her warmly. More characters appear, connecting tables, and our character moves along the extended table, looking for the group that she best connects with. She comes across groups that represent the working parents, side hustlers, etc until finally she finds her space, where she feels most at home.



Opening scene from A Space for You

The entire campaign deliberately took on the outdated perception of what the world of work looked like, using metaphor as a simple but effective approach for delivering the message, easily adaptable across channels, partner teams and market.



Creator content coming off A Space for You



Press and social assets from the Space for You campaign

We embodied an inclusive and collaborative space, representative of the modern working world, and actively sought to drive action and engagement on the platform with #findyourspace.



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### 3. Rounding up with the Women's Euros: Follow In Her Footsteps (30th June - 31st July)

The central activation throughout the sponsorship period was called 'Follow In Her Footsteps'. To bring this to life, we enlisted the legendary Carol Thomas, England's first Women's EURO captain with 56 caps, to become the ambassador for our campaign.



Carol Thomas pictured in our LinkedIn WEUROS campaign 2022

Carol became the ultimate representation of previously underappreciated and invisible female role-models who have made massive contributions to their fields. Alongside other inspirational talent - her old Euros Final opponent Anette Börjesson, Rachel Yankey, Chloe Morgan and Iqra Ishmail - Carol was challenged to take part in a PR stunt to complete a 30-mile walk from Gresty Road stadium where the first Women's EURO semi-final took place in 1984 with only 1,000 people in attendance, to Old Trafford where the tournament launched to a record-breaking, sold out crowd of **70,000**.



Visuals of our 'Follow in Her Footsteps 2022' campaign

The walk itself became an 'anchor moment' for LinkedIn to invite press to capture the historical moment, capture branded content and drive conversation online. In an emotive, hero film, capturing the players' walk, they discussed their careers, challenges, wins and importantly, **how they've supported one another to achieve professional success.** These conversations reflected how LinkedIn and its community could support other women to achieve their goals, whatever their profession or industry.

<sup>17</sup> TOTAL SPEND ACROSS ALL THREE CAMPAIGNS: \$4.9M = £4M.



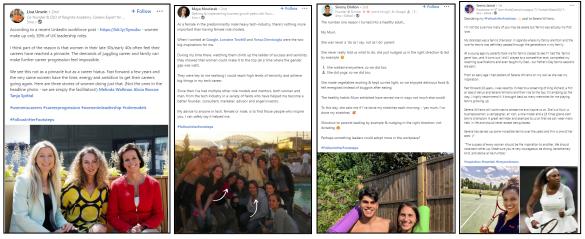
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Alongside the PR stunt and hero film, the fully integrated campaign included paid digital and social media and OOH. The LinkedIn editorial team also supported the campaign by posting articles and highlighting prominent female footballers who are on LinkedIn throughout the tournament.

We also connected with creators/influencers, who were able to share their own stories on the platform about the female role models that inspire them in their own lives. Member led content created even more relevance around the message as they focused primarily on role models off the pitch.



Member Engagement in the Follow In Her Footsteps campaign



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### The Results...

(What were the measurable outcomes?)

**#FlexibleIs** was an International campaign, but we will focus on our UK results for consistency across all results (and given available data).



That said, System1 called out #FlexibleIs as one of the strongest IWD campaigns ever measured, with good potential to drive brand growth for the brand. When looking at what System1 called the 'addressable audience of professionals', the impact is even better - a 5 star piece of work, with far greater long-term brand building effects.

"The proportion of viewers feeling happiness after seeing the ad jumps from 43% to an impressive 60%. And short-term Spike is exceptional for both audiences, but again greater among the addressable audience." <sup>18</sup>



Source: System 1

<sup>18</sup> https://system1group.com/ad-of-the-week/flexible-working-for-flexible-audiences



Space for You outperformed all targets, with a significant increase in both Belonging & Visitation intent amongst the brand's core audience of working professionals, aged 25-49 yo, and a positive impact on brand love, career and community perceptions.

Metric	Results
Love	+9pts
Belonging	+8.3pts
Career Perception - Helps me move forward professionally	+5.7pts
Community Perception - Makes me feel like I'm part of a community	+4.9pts
Increased Visitation Intent	+6.9pts

Kantar Space for You Campaign Wrap Up, 25 - 549y/o professionals

The campaign also generated a: +14.5% uplift in branded search, against a target of 3-5%.

Space for You System 1 results also saw the campaign resonating particularly strongly with working parents, predicting long-term effects.



Source: System 1

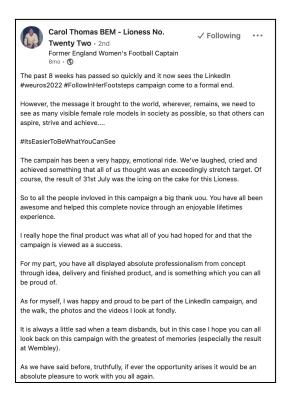


Similarly, "Follow in her Footsteps" outperformed targets, and continued to build on the success of "Space for You".

Metric	Results
Love	+7pts
Belonging	+8pts
Career Perception - Helps me move forward professionally	+8pts
Community Perception - Makes me feel like I'm part of a community	+12ppts
Increased Visitation Intent	+4pts

Kantar Space for You Campaign Wrap Up, 25 - 549y/o professionals

Follow in her Footsteps also generated significant PR and recognition, garnering 77 pieces of earned media and press coverage across print, online and broadcast with a potential reach of 840 million+19. To this day, Carol remains active on the platform and credits LinkedIn with giving her visibility and a platform<sup>20</sup> – rightfully deserved.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> LinkedIn Follow In Her Footsteps Wrap Report, 2022
<sup>20</sup>https://www.linkedin.com/in/carol-thomas-bem-lioness-no-twenty-two-171516242/



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Carol Thomas reflecting on the campaign on LinkedIn

## 'It's a bit silly that we had to play with a size 4 ball'

Carol Thomas BEM on progress in the international women's game since the former England captain blazed a trail in the 1980s

The Telegraph on female football trailblazers, 2022<sup>21</sup>

We are unable to break down the campaign specific results (as above) by gender, but **brand** tracking across all adults (18 - 60 y/o) demonstrates the **positive impact of the** campaigns on women, with a long tail for 'Belonging' even after the campaigns had ended.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> https://www.telegraph.co.uk/womens-sport/female-football-trailblazers/carol-thomas-footballer/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Campaign dates: Flexiblels - April 21<sup>st</sup> to May 25<sup>th</sup>; Space for You - 16 to June 30<sup>th</sup> Women's Euros - 4<sup>th</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup>



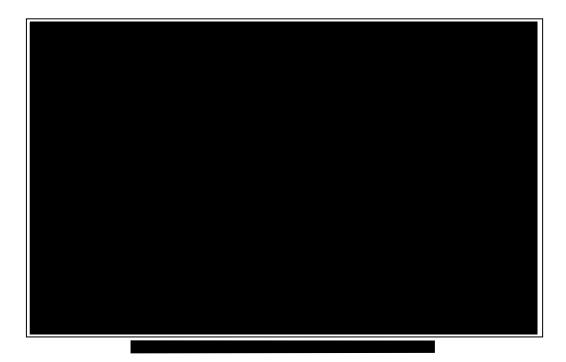
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By including "pull" tactics and clear call to actions driving back to the platform across all campaigns, we were also able to encourage engagement in numerous ways – from simply 'liking' more content to making impactful connections with others. As you can see below, we also saw correlations of these types of engagements alongside our campaign activity, primarily with Space for You (mass campaign).





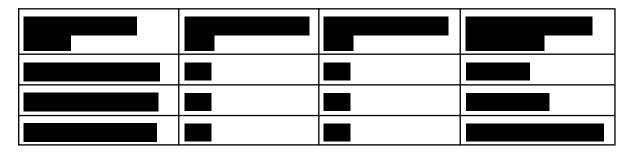
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Weekly Active Users<sup>23</sup> also continued to grow over the period of the campaigns (breakdown below by month):

While we're unable to isolate the impact of the campaigns in the UK, nor show their contribution to global LinkedIn revenue,



When **shortlisted for Brand of the Year for Marketing Week**, they said: "LinkedIn's revenue rose 26% to \$768m (£629m) in the fourth quarter to 30 June, growth parent company Microsoft attributed in large part to the platform's marketing and talent solutions businesses."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Weekly Active Users measures how many people are using LinkedIn on a weekly basis, whether simply logging in or performing a specific action - e.g. liking a post, commenting, sharing a post, reading an article. WAU is one way to understand how engaged our members are - if someone regularly logs in and uses LinkedInt, it is a good indication that they are an engaged member.

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24 https://www.marketingweek.com/2022-brand-of-the-year-shortlist/



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LinkedIn was also **shortlisted for Brand of the Year 2022 by The Marketing Society**, alongside some pretty impressive competition and called out for *'cleverly highlighting how it can be a force for good* <sup>25</sup>.



## Is it still a risk when it's necessary?

(What risks did you take? How does your work advocate the reputation/importance of the marketing industry?)

Although we knew that we had the right ambition for the brand and the responsibility to set the world of work right for women, there was always a chance that we would not speak to all of our audience (remembering that there are currently more men on the platform).

Despite this, we continued with our mission. We predicted that the Women's Euro was going to be a seismic moment in society and took a leap, deciding to invest to become one of the first sponsors. But we knew that with our support we could play a part in making the tournament a huge success and changing the game for Women.

Following this we launched 3 campaigns with women as our primary focus in quick succession; evolving our advertising style; and starting to build our reputation as a thought-leader for equity.

This risk has paid off. It turns out that focusing on equality for the minority can indeed have a positive impact on the majority.

Achieving equity remains highly necessary in the world of work. We're only just warming up...

**WORD COUNT: 2970** 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/marketing-society-brand-year-2022-shortlist/1802237