Executive Summary

Texas A&M is ranked as one of the top 10 engineering schools in the nation and they are constantly developing new engineering programs to serve the industry. In 2018, the Master of Engineering Technical Management (METM) was created at the request of a team of industry leaders who identified a deficit in engineering leadership in their companies. The master program is tailored to meet the needs of engineering and technical professionals looking to enhance their technical management skills, business acumen, personal leadership effectiveness and project management skill set. Dr. Ben Zoghi, director of the Texas A&M METM program, challenged Forward Vision Marketing to grow the program's enrollment with qualified candidates nationwide.

Texas A&M's METM program had a very specific criteria for qualified candidates which included engineering and technical professionals with a bachelor's degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) from an accredited university. Further targeted qualities were at least four years of relevant work experience and a desire to pursue an MBA or MS in Engineering. Forward Vision had to find the best way to reach this target audience and utilize tactics from advertising, social media, SEO, email marketing, and virtual and live events.

LinkedIn proved to be a very powerful tool to engage the target audiences and generate significant enrollment growth for higher education and other businesses. This case study examines how Forward Vision used LinkedIn as a primary platform to reach prospects with the desired profile and how the platform generated significant enrollment growth for the Texas A&M engineering program.

Texas A&M's Experience

Dr. Zoghi, Director of Master of Engineering in Technical Management at Texas A&M, had this to say about the experience:

Challenges and Objectives

Forward Vision developed a strategic marketing plan to attract highly qualified engineering prospects and accomplish this ambitious goal.

1. **Identifying the target audience and value proposition:** Forward Vision first had to understand and identify the target audience and the value proposition for each target persona by conducting an internal survey of current students and alumni.

2. **Generating awareness:** The next step was to raise awareness about the METM program among the identified audience and communicate it as an excellent option for career enhancement.

3. **Measure effectiveness:** Texas A&M gave Forward Vision the freedom to test multiple marketing methods to drive target prospects to apply to the program. Forward Vision provided metrics for all the approaches and enabled a benchmark report for various LinkedIn ads.

Strategy and Implementation

Texas A&M asked which social media platform would reach the most candidates, so Forward Vision created new social media profiles for LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter/X, and Instagram just for the Texas A&M Master of Engineering Technical Management program.

Engagement from the Texas A&M Aggie community far surpassed industry benchmarks, which is partly attributed to the amazing Aggie spirit. The LinkedIn social profile was the strongest channel, resulting in the highest follower growth, which grew to over 500 within a year. The Instagram account added over 80 followers, and Facebook added 66.

"We brought Forward Vision Marketing in to grow our Master of Engineering Technical Management enrollment, and they more than delivered. They created our social media accounts, managed SEO, and produced our brochures. We saw an immediate impact from our new social media presence, grew over 500 LinkedIn followers in a year, and doubled METM program enrollment."

Key Strategies

Getting the Most from Social Media Engagement

The following social media approach helped to drive engagement from the target audience:

- Comparisons of the program with competitors
- Student success stories
- Instructor profiles
- Testimonial videos
- Engaging event visuals
- Thought leadership quotes

Leveraging LinkedIn Ads
Forward Vision Marketing recognized LinkedIn as the ideal platform to connect with potential candidates due to its robust targeting capabilities. To determine the most effective ad campaign formats, Forward Vision used a range of LinkedIn advertising options, including the following:

Sponsored Content
Since the social media channel started without any followers we strategically developed and promoted sponsored content for the target audience's LinkedIn feeds. This format delivered engaging content, such as articles, blog posts, and videos, to capture the attention and interest of potential candidates. This strategy yielded an impressive click-through rate (CTR) of 0.57% when boosting a post but only 0.28% when targeting website visits.

Carousel Ads
One way to appeal to the target audience was to use multiple images and videos in a single post. This format achieved an excellent CTR of 0.53% at a $7.14 cost per click.

Conversational Ads Messaging
Part of the success of this campaign resulted from having personalized, one-on-one conversations with prospects using LinkedIn's Conversational Ads Messaging feature. This interactive format enabled candidates to get their questions answered quickly, and guided new students through the enrollment process. Conversational Ads demonstrated the best CTR, averaging 62.86%.

Document Ads
Forward Vision used Document Ads to share program brochures. This format achieved a CTR of 0.72%, providing valuable resources to interested individuals.

Event Ads
Event Ads promoted information session and other program-related events. This format achieved a CTR of 2.48% from the target audience, generating interest and event registrations.

Video Ads
Video Ads delivered engaging video content highlighting the benefits of the METM program. This format increased brand awareness for Texas A&M's METM program and captured the target audience's attention. It yielded the lowest CTR, around 0.33%, and cost more – $9-16 per click.
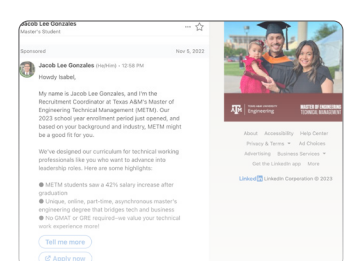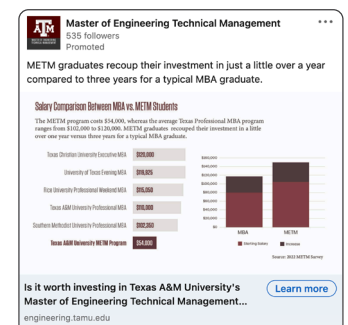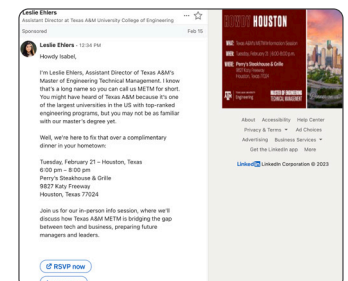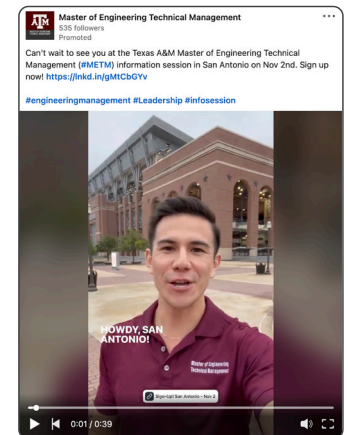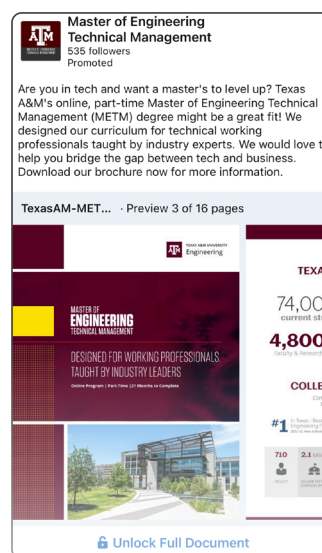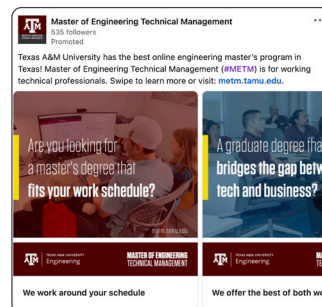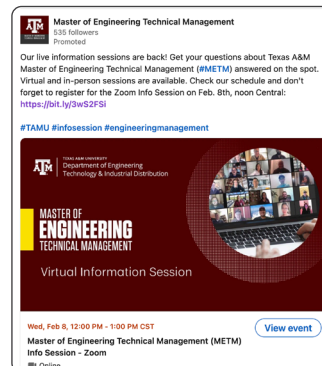
Results and Achievements

The LinkedIn advertising campaign used different formats and yielded the following outcomes:

	Average CTR Click-through rate	Average CPM Cost per thousand	Average CPC Cost per click
Sponsored Content	0.57%	$13.87	$2.41
Sponsored Content with website visits	0.28%	$25.58	$9.09
Carousel Ads	0.53%	$37.68	$7.14
Conversational Ads	62.86%	$291.77	$0.48
Document Ads	0.72%	$56.60	$7.81
Event Ads	2.48%	$36.40	$1.89
Video Ads	0.33%	$41.92	$16.52
Boosted Video Ads	0.38%	$14.39	$9.44

Conclusion

Profile optimization efforts on LinkedIn played a crucial role in Forward Vision's successful promotion of Texas A&M's METM program. The new LinkedIn profile achieved significant growth in followers and engagement and helped to achieve the outstanding result of doubling program enrollment due to these successful techniques.

This case study highlights LinkedIn's importance for higher education recruiting efforts. It also serves as an example for technology companies that want to build credibility and attract the attention of a target audience. Additionally, the findings confirmed a marketing trend that prospects engage more easily with social media and virtual events than with in-person events.