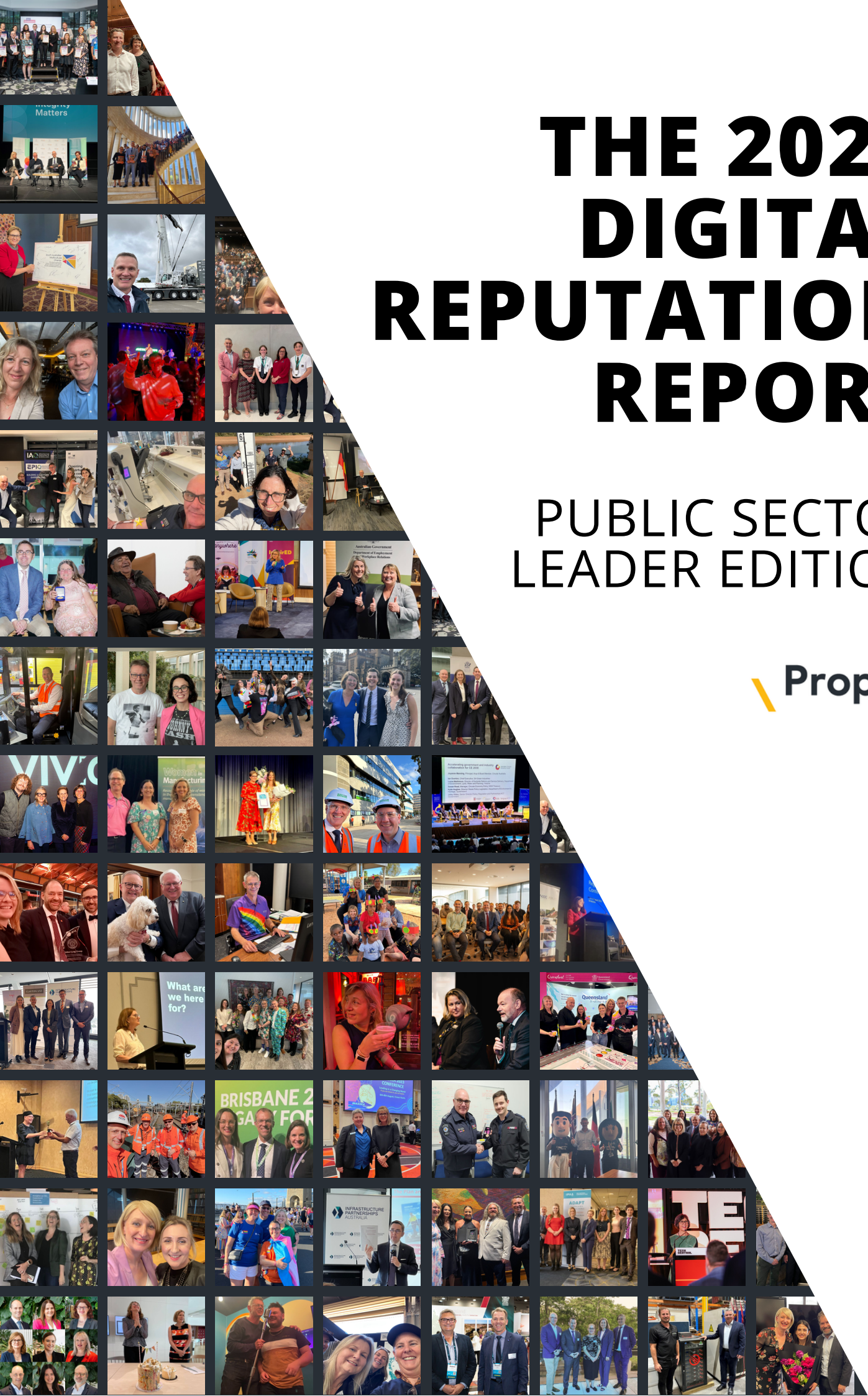


# THE 2023 DIGITAL REPUTATION REPORT

PUBLIC SECTOR  
LEADER EDITION





THE TRUTH IS, CURATING AN EFFECTIVE  
DIGITAL REPUTATION IS NOW **AN  
INESCAPABLE PART OF GOOD  
PUBLIC LEADERSHIP.**



**The Hon. Victor Dominello**  
Co-Founder, ServiceGen

# AUTHORS.

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**Roger Christie**  
Managing Director,  
Propel



**Martin Stewart-Weeks**  
Founder,  
Public Purpose

# RESEARCHERS.

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**Jim Macnamara**  
Distinguished Professor of  
Public Communication,  
School of Communication,  
University of Technology Sydney



**Emily Booth**  
Research Associate,  
School of Communication,  
University of Technology Sydney

# CONTRIBUTORS.

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**The Hon. Victor Dominello**  
Co-Founder,  
ServiceGen



# FOREWORD.

## THE PUBLIC SECTOR ACROSS AUSTRALIA AND AROUND THE WORLD IS NAVIGATING A PERIOD OF COMPLEX TRANSITION AND INTENSE TRANSFORMATION, LARGELY DRIVEN BY THE IMPACT OF SUCCESSIVE AND RELENTLESS WAVES OF DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION.

At the eye of that storm are public sector leaders whose capacity to combine competence, empathy and trust at the core of their performance is being tested to new limits of both opportunity and risk.

Central to that task is the way leaders turn up, how they show themselves to their colleagues, to the people they lead and - most of all - to the people and communities they serve.

In ways that, for some, can be challenging and uncomfortable, and which ask deep questions about generations of "good practice" in government and public administration, **leaders are coming to grips with a new imperative to match their professional persona with their humanity.**

This research, which explores how public leaders are fashioning their digital reputation, is a timely reminder of a mindset and toolkit which is becoming an indispensable part of a public leader's core strength.

But these are not fringe interests or a passing curiosity. These are powerful new ways for leaders to drive big impacts on talent, performance and results.

Two observations from the research findings are worth bearing in mind.

**Firstly, getting this right matters.** The report notes that *"leaders who use LinkedIn to share their human face, voice and values generate a stronger response than their peers."*

Just bear in mind that the 100+ leaders analysed command a LinkedIn audience of almost 170,000. Not a bad community of influence and practice.

And secondly, **wrangling their digital reputation, in this case through the purposeful use of LinkedIn, activates a powerful chain of cause and effect:** *"Clarity drives confidence. Confidence drives authenticity. Authenticity drives connection. Connection drives performance."*

Authenticity, connection, performance. **It's a powerful leadership trifecta at a time when the public sector is looking for better ways to build trust and confidence in its work and contribution.** The stakes couldn't be higher.

A focus on integrity and ethics, on sustained and rising technical competence and on better ways to engage with the people and communities they serve are at a high - and rising - premium across government and the public sector.

What this research suggests is that at the heart of that challenge is how to mobilise the humanity of public leadership. We know it works and we know what sometimes gets in the way.

***The 2023 Digital Reputation Report: Public Sector Leader Edition*** is full of timely and powerful evidence, and plenty of practical ideas, about a dimension of their work that is a vital part of the transformation that public sector leaders are living and shaping.

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**Martin Stewart-Weeks**  
Founder, Public Purpose

# INTRODUCTION.

## **SIMPLY PUT, YOUR DIGITAL REPUTATION IS THE IMPRESSION YOU LEAVE ON OTHERS WHEN THEY GOOGLE YOUR NAME.**

Anyone, anywhere, at any time can access the results to make decisions about you.

For talent, **whether they want to work with you**; prospective partners, **whether they want to collaborate with you**; and citizens, **whether they will trust you**.

You don't control it, but you can influence it.

Leaders - 'google' your own name now and you will likely all see the same first result: your LinkedIn profile.

**Your LinkedIn profile is your opportunity to own digital first impressions.** To show people who you are, what you stand for, and the credible company you keep. It's your ticket to taking greater control of your narrative and building trust with audiences. Trust the sector craves today.

It's something *you* control. Provided you have one, of course, and you use it well.

***The 2023 Digital Reputation Report: Public Sector Leader Edition* focuses on LinkedIn for this very reason.**

**Almost two thirds of our most senior public servants have a LinkedIn profile.** These leaders are well placed to claim top spot on Google's search results, and use their LinkedIn profiles to communicate with key audiences to drive connection and trust.

**Except, almost half of these leaders' profiles were dormant.** And only a third had posted proactively on LinkedIn in our six month analysis window.

If the concept of a 'digital reputation' is new to you, you might be wondering: 'Why LinkedIn?' **Why is this analysis important?**

It all boils down to this.

The sector is competing alongside everyone else for trust and talent. It must find a way to surpass the salaries, bonuses and benefits talent can access elsewhere. **It must leverage its greatest assets - people and purpose - and it must do so at scale.**

LinkedIn gives leaders direct access to more than 14 million professional Australians - a substantial audience. Leaders can choose how and when they wish to engage them.

LinkedIn rewards users who share more than the corporate script, and Company Page content accounts for just 3% of what a user sees in their LinkedIn feed - you cannot win with such a thin slice of the pie.<sup>1</sup>

Industry reports like Edelman's *Trust Barometer* and Brunswick's *Connected Leadership Report* show just how valuable an asset leaders are in the fight for trust - and how their choices and actions online impact talent attraction and retention.<sup>2,3</sup> How?

**Human connection and stories. The data in this report is remarkably clear.**

When leaders are empowered to use LinkedIn as their authentic selves, they build an enviable level of awareness, engagement and - ultimately - trust with audiences.

However, to adopt Minister Katy Gallagher's words on the APS Reforms last year, this is simply "*the start of the journey*".<sup>4</sup> A catalyst for a more considered conversation about the benefits of **sharing more of the public sector's human face, voice and values through its leaders.**

I hope it does just that for your team.

---

**Roger Christie**  
Managing Director, Propel

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THE MORE WE SEE THE HUMAN BEHIND  
THE TITLE, **THE MORE WE CAN  
CONNECT WITH THEM AND THEIR  
STORY.**



**Roger Christie**  
Managing Director, Propel

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

## THE 2023 DIGITAL REPUTATION REPORT ANALYSED SIX MONTHS OF LINKEDIN DATA FOR 100+ SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS: ~1,000 POSTS, 1,500+ COMMENTS AND OVER 130,000 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS.

It is the first in depth report analysing the LinkedIn profiles and activities of leaders across the Australian public service.

Working with research partner the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Propel analysed 100+ of our most senior public servants - Secretaries, CEOs, Directors-General - to see how they used their individual LinkedIn profiles between 1 March and 31 August 2023.

From our research, you will find answers to important LinkedIn, communication and reputation questions, including:

- How can LinkedIn best support the sector's strategic priorities?
- Why is it important for individual leaders to be present, not just agencies?
- What types of content resonate most with online audiences?
- What risks and barriers need to be addressed, and how?
- And which leaders provide examples - even role models - to learn from?

The report reveals one clear, crucial finding: **leaders who use LinkedIn to share their human face, voice and values generate a stronger response than their peers.**

But these leaders are in a small minority.

Of the 100+ leaders analysed, **65% had a LinkedIn profile**. While two thirds may seem reasonable, a surprising **45% of these were dormant or 'inactive'**. A further 23% of these were rarely active, with fewer than one post per month.

In fact, **only 36% of all 100+ leaders analysed had posted at all in the six month period**. When they did post, they were far more likely to talk about work.

Our data shows active leaders were **13x more likely to share 'work' posts than 'human' posts**. This is despite 'human' posts being almost **4x more effective at generating public engagement** than 'work' posts. We now have evidence for change.

The report surfaces this and other key themes. It shows our LinkedIn feeds are already **rich with stories that show the sector's competence**; projects meeting community needs. But its warmth - a key component of trust - is less obvious. Why, and what needs to change?

Our research also reveals the **empowering effect leaders have on staff** when they step up online. Why aren't *more* leaders, and what would compel them to act?

Our report explores **perceptions of risk for leaders**, and how tweaks to strategy and governance could help clarify the role and value of LinkedIn for the sector.

Because there is enormous potential for leaders online, and the future - based on our data - looks increasingly bright.

When leaders are more 'human', our data shows they greatly outperform the average - they enjoy **3.5x more followers** and generate **5x more public engagements than the average leader on LinkedIn**. Reach and influence anyone would value.

The report ends with recommended actions leaders and their teams can implement themselves. Encouragingly, there are already fantastic examples for them to model off - many highlighted in the report.

The example they set reveals **the best LinkedIn strategy for public sector leaders: a human-centred one.**

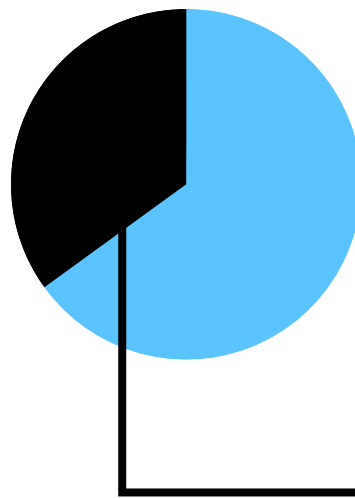


# KEY STATISTICS.

According to a LinkedIn study by Davis, J., Wolff, H., Forret, M., & Sherry E. Sullivan, S. (2020), "it was not the number of contacts one had, but the frequency of usage, that mattered for the receipt of career benefits."<sup>5</sup>

Of all 100+ leaders analysed (e.g. '100%'), **65% have a LinkedIn profile** and, therefore, **35% do not**. When analysing the 65% who do have a profile:

- **29%** have a profile but **were inactive or dormant**.
- **15%** have a profile and **were rarely active**.
- **8%** have a profile and **were moderately active**.
- **13%** have a profile and **were very active**.



**65%**

of the leaders analysed have a LinkedIn profile.

**35%**

of the cohort have no LinkedIn profile.



NO PROFILE (35%)	INACTIVE OR DORMANT (29%)	RARELY ACTIVE (15%)	MODERATELY ACTIVE (8%)	VERY ACTIVE (13%)
No LinkedIn profile	No own posts	Monthly average <1 own post per month	Monthly average 1-2 own posts per month	Monthly average 3+ own posts per month

**45%**

of the leaders with a profile were inactive or dormant.

- Of the 65% with a profile, **45% were dormant**.
- Only **36% posted at least once to LinkedIn** in our six month analysis window.
- **21% posted five times or more** during the six month analysis window.
- Leaders were **3.5x more likely to comment** than post or repost.
- All leaders analysed are collectively followed by **almost 170,000 LinkedIn users** (169,089).

# 'AVERAGE' VS. 'ACTIVE'.

According to Adikari, S., & Dutta, K. (2020), "there is increasing value in having one's profile noticed within the network."<sup>6</sup> Having a benchmark is a helpful way for leaders to see how they compare across basic metrics.

What does an 'average' vs 'active' public sector leader look like on LinkedIn? (Note: 'Average' includes those without a LinkedIn profile. 'Active' only includes leaders deemed 'very active'.)



## AVERAGE



## ACTIVE

FOLLOWERS

**~1,500**

An average public sector leader has nearly 1,500 LinkedIn followers (1,496).

**~4,100**

An active public sector leader has 4,130 LinkedIn followers - nearly 3x the average.

POSTS

**< 1**

An average leader posts twice every three months (~4 in six months).

**4+**

An active leader posts 24+ times in six months - more than 6x the average.

COMMENTS

**2+**

An average leader shares 2.4 comments per month (14 in six months).

**9+**

An active leader shares ~60 comments in six months (56); 4x the average.

ENG'MENTS

**~200**

An average leader generates 195 public engagements (reactions, comments, reposts) on their posts each month (1,170 in six months).

**~900**

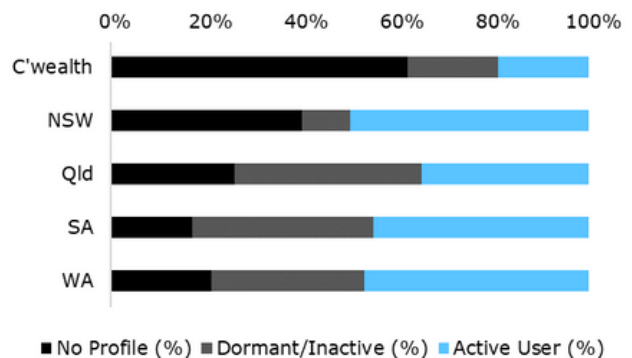
An active leader generates 893 public engagements (reactions, comments, reposts) on their posts each month (5,356 in six months) - more than 4.5x the average.

# AROUND THE COUNTRY.

**WHILE THIS REPORT ONLY INCLUDES LEADERS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH, NEW SOUTH WALES, QUEENSLAND, SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AND WESTERN AUSTRALIAN JURISDICTIONS, SOME INTERESTING TRENDS HAVE EMERGED.**

By creating averages for each jurisdiction across familiar metrics, we are able to see which leadership cohorts are most active and generate the most engagement compared with peers.

The chart right shows **New South Wales (NSW)** has the highest percentage of active public sector leaders from those leaders analysed, closely followed by Western Australia (WA) and South Australia (SA).

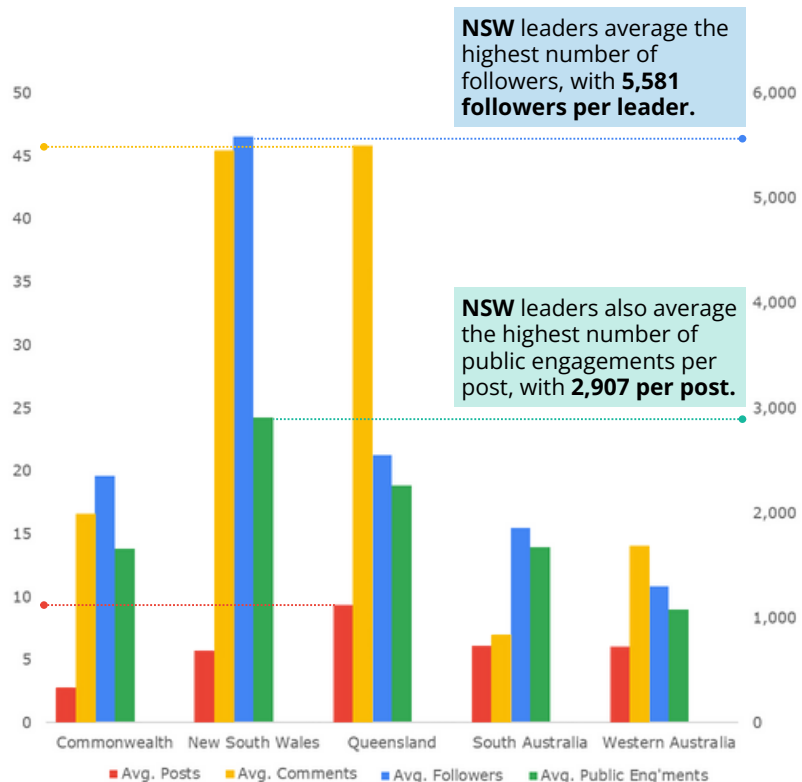


Closer analysis of leaders' efforts - and the resulting response from LinkedIn audiences - reveals how some leaders are outperforming their peers in other jurisdictions (see below).

NSW leaders enjoy the **highest number of followers**, but Queensland (Qld) leaders are the **most active posters and commenters** on average. Furthermore, while NSW leaders generate the highest number of public engagements per post, compared to their respective audience sizes, Qld, SA and WA leaders **all generate an impressive level of audience engagement.**

**Queensland** leaders average the highest number of comments, with **45.9 comments per leader** in the six month analysis window.

**Queensland** leaders also average the highest number of posts, with **9.4 posts per leader** in the six month analysis window.



# LINKEDIN PERSONAS.

**BY ANALYSING THOUSANDS OF LEADER POSTS AND COMMENTS, IT WAS POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY DISTINCT 'PERSONAS' FOR THE WAYS PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERS PREFER TO USE LINKEDIN.**

Like the personas, the public response to these different leader styles is quite consistent (e.g. broadcast statements generate reactions, not comments). Leaders should consider the outcome they wish to achieve on LinkedIn to help inform their approach with audiences.



## RIBBON CUTTERS

Primarily post about events and work-related activities (look for statements such as *"Great to attend..."*) and are identified by their high 'work' to 'human' content ratio. One of the more common personas, they often attract public reactions over comments.



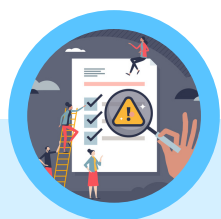
## CONVERSATION STARTERS

Often use LinkedIn to ask questions, listen and discuss ideas with staff and other stakeholders, and are identified by their high 'comment-to-post' ratio. While not common, this approach appears to build rapport, affinity and trust with audiences.



## CORPORATE CONDUITS

Use their profile as a distribution channel for corporate news. Their tone is formal, they regularly 'repost' agency content, and they rarely engage in comments. Like 'Ribbon Cutters', this often attracts reactions over comments, particularly from staff.



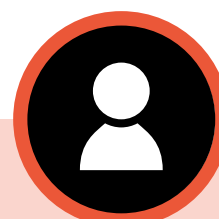
## FORMAT FOLLOWERS

Consistently use LinkedIn best practice post conventions to maximise performance, but this strict structure overshadows their own voice. They are identified by post conventions (e.g. spacing, images and emojis) often used to drive reach.



## TRUE STORYTELLERS

Have the most distinctive voices on LinkedIn, and regularly draw on their own stories, experiences and passions to connect more deeply with audiences. This 'human' approach generates the strongest levels of audience engagement.



## DIGITAL PLACEHOLDERS

Have a profile, but it is commonly dormant and oftentimes incomplete (e.g. no photo or About section). At 45% of all leaders with a LinkedIn profile, this is one of the more common personas, providing little opportunity to engage and empower others.

# BEST PERFORMING POSTS.

**WHILE A LEADER'S OWN LINKEDIN OBJECTIVES ARE MOST IMPORTANT, ENGAGEMENT LEVELS PROVIDE A HELPFUL BENCHMARK FOR AUDIENCE INTEREST AND RESONANCE.**

Below were the top five posts based on engagement levels (total reactions, comments, reposts). Each balances a professional focus with personal voice and tone. Click each quote to see the full post.

1

**Kiersten Fishburn, NSW Dept. of Planning & Environment (1,893 engagements)**

The most engaging post was Kiersten Fishburn sharing her appointment as Secretary at NSW Dept. of Planning & Environment. The post attracted 264 comments, highlighting the sheer scale of the community and goodwill public sector leaders can access via LinkedIn.

I HAVE BEEN **DEEPLY IMPRESSED AND INSPIRED BY THE HARD WORK, ENTHUSIASM AND DEDICATION OF OUR PEOPLE IN DPE,** AND THEIR PASSION TO DELIVER GREAT OUTCOMES FOR THE PEOPLE OF NSW.

2

**Kiersten Fishburn, NSW Dept. of Planning & Environment (1,611 engagements)**

The second most engaging post also came from Kiersten Fishburn, who shared her cancer diagnosis and recovery experience. The post includes a host of reflections on the importance of strong leadership and compassion, and her belief in the power of the public service.

**AUTHENTICITY BRINGS REWARDS:**

FROM THE START I TOLD MY COLLEAGUES ABOUT MY SITUATION.

I SHARED OPENLY AND HONESTLY WHAT I WAS GOING THROUGH AND HOW I FELT.

... I HAD NEVER IMAGINED MY LEADERSHIP SHADOW CAME WITH A TURBAN ON, BUT I'M SO PROUD THAT DOING SOMETHING DIFFICULT (AND OFTEN HUMILIATING) ACTUALLY GAVE SO MUCH MEANING TO MY PEOPLE.

# BEST PERFORMING POSTS.

3

**Susan Pearce, NSW Health (1,324 engagements)**

The third most engaging post was Susan Pearce, Secretary at NSW Health, reflecting on the COVID vaccine roll out anniversary. The post tags Dr Kerry Chant, and also features a photo that clearly shows the relief on Susan's face - a very human moment marking a major professional milestone.



CONGRATULATIONS TO SUSAN AND KERRY - **ASTUTE AND EMPATHETIC LEADERSHIP. I'M PROUD TO BE WORKING WITHIN HEALTH.** I FEEL THE SMALLER OF THE TWO CAKE DELICACIES SHOULD BE KNOWN AS 'THE BOOSTER'.  
*(NOTE: PUBLIC COMMENT)*



4

**Susan Pearce, NSW Health (1,166 engagements)**

The fourth most engaging post also came from Susan Pearce, this time sharing a personal reflection on her 35 years in health, and acknowledging both her family and the unwavering courage and commitment of her colleagues across the NSW Health community through incredibly challenging times.



AND FOR THE MANY, MANY THOUSANDS OF STAFF WITHIN **THE NSW HEALTH FAMILY WHO HAVE HAD THE HARDEST OF WEEKS AFTER THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE LOSS OF ONE OF OUR OWN** FOLLOWING SOME OF THE MOST CHALLENGING YEARS OUR HEALTH SYSTEM HAS FACED. I AM ETERNALLY IN THEIR DEBT.



5

**Mike Kaiser, Qld Dept. of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (1,027 engagements)**

The fifth most engaging post was Mike Kaiser's reflection on the role and obligation of public servants in the wake of Robodebt. A message he shared with his department colleagues internally and then amplified to all public servants via LinkedIn.



**...OUR OVERRIDING OBLIGATION IS TO THE PEOPLE. THAT'S WHY WE'RE CALLED PUBLIC SERVANTS.**





AUTHENTICITY, CONNECTION,  
PERFORMANCE. **IT'S A POWERFUL  
LEADERSHIP TRIFECTA** AT A TIME  
WHEN THE PUBLIC SECTOR IS LOOKING  
FOR BETTER WAYS TO BUILD TRUST  
AND CONFIDENCE IN ITS WORK AND  
CONTRIBUTION.



**Martin Stewart-Weeks**  
Founder, Public Purpose

# KEY FINDINGS.

**WHILE THE KEY STATISTICS ARE DESIGNED TO HELP LEADERS BENCHMARK AGAINST INDUSTRY, THE KEY FINDINGS GO A STEP FURTHER TO SHOW WHICH LINKEDIN STRATEGIES WILL BEST SUPPORT SECTOR PRIORITIES AND MEET AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS.**

While not all leaders regularly post in an authentic, human voice, there is much to learn from those who do (and those who do not). By assessing leader strategies and performance against sector guidelines, it's possible to find the balance between personality and policy.

1

## REFRAME RISK

Information will continue to be shared about leaders online, through platforms like LinkedIn, Glassdoor, blogs and forums. Audiences will continue to 'google' their names to see what they say and stand for. The key question leaders and their teams must be asking is this: *are we better to stay silent, or influence what others see?*

2

## HUMAN, WORK OR BOTH?

Our data shows 80% of posts made by 'very active' leaders focused on 'work' matters. By analysing the data, it turns out bringing a human face to public sector work presents an enormous opportunity to leaders and their teams. And - importantly - it's an approach that supports current social media guidance.

3

## GETTING WARMER

To fulfil their trust ambitions, public sector leaders must be seen as both 'warm' and 'competent'. If leaders only share their work online, they will always fall short. LinkedIn must be used to build warmth, connection and a human face for the sector, in order to restore public trust.

4

## VISIBILITY MATTERS

Public sector leaders' choices and actions "set the tone" for the rest of their organisations online. But one voice is never enough. The messenger and the message must match the intended audience. Visibility and representation matter.

5

## PURPOSE, STRATEGY

A clear purpose will ensure leaders gain the confidence they need to drive performance and reduce risk. Clarity drives confidence. Confidence drives authenticity. Authenticity drives connection. Connection drives performance.



# REFRAME RISK.

# 93%

According to Propel's companion survey of public sector communication advisers, 93% of respondents believe their agency would benefit if their leaders were more active on LinkedIn.<sup>7</sup>

## OUR DATA SHOWS THE MAJORITY OF LEADERS BELIEVE IT IS STILL SAFER TO BE DORMANT THAN ACTIVE ONLINE.

**An overwhelming majority (64%) either don't have a LinkedIn profile, or have one but failed to post during the analysis period.**

A further 15% were 'rarely active', posting less than once a month over six months.

That's 79% of public sector leaders who felt it better to say very little - or nothing at all - over a full six months. **Nearly four out of every five leaders.** Why?

The sector has plenty of valuable stories to tell, so we can only assume there is a prevailing belief that the risks outweigh the rewards of doing so.

Yet people today are so heavily influenced by what they see and read online. And the reality remains that **every public sector leader has a digital reputation - even those without a LinkedIn profile.**

Information will continue to be shared about these leaders online, through platforms like LinkedIn, Glassdoor, blogs and forums. Key audiences will continue to 'google' their names to see what they say and stand for.

**The key question leaders and their teams must be asking is this: *are we better to influence what others see?***

In staying silent, leaders miss invaluable opportunities to connect and build rapport with audiences like staff and candidates, and to participate - visibly - in important discussions that show the sector is listening, contributing and evolving.

More than 14 million Australian LinkedIn users are looking but find minimal input from leaders. Invisibility or a perceived lack of transparency online are far greater risks than participation today.

Leaders' capacity to use LinkedIn well - and, in doing so, meet the sector's talent and trust priorities - requires a strategy many seem ill-equipped to access.

# 1

## CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR THE APS REQUESTS LEADERS REMAIN “PROFESSIONAL AND IMPARTIAL”, AND TO AVOID “PRAISING” THEIR AGENCY.<sup>8</sup>

If guidelines aren’t adhered to, a leader’s actions may “*damage public confidence.*” A serious consequence that ought to be avoided at all costs.

We’ll cover the reference to impartiality in our next finding, but **praising teams and their work should be essential for restoring pride in the sector**, and fostering a culture of recognition and excellence. Should it be done on LinkedIn?

It goes without saying, repeat and unwarranted praise is a risk. As is only ever sharing good news, in any forum.

But at a time when leaders are trying to attract and retain quality talent in their teams, **knowing they can use platforms like LinkedIn to recognise their staff and team successes** - particularly in the public and scalable world of social media - **would only aid this pursuit.** Is there a happy medium that supports both goals?

Given the data and context, **it seems timely to revisit the conversation about the role of LinkedIn for the sector.**

The below data - from a more contained survey of public sector communications advisers - shows how current guidance may be impacting leaders’ confidence on, and subsequent investment in, LinkedIn.

It highlights the gap between the value leaders see in LinkedIn vs. the perceived value among key audiences.

But when leaders only hear of risk versus reward, or they are contained to use LinkedIn in way that doesn’t allow full benefit from the platform, few are likely to keep coming back.

Conversely, by changing the conversation and positioning LinkedIn as a vital way to build connection and credibility with audiences, many more leaders would be willing to step up and engage. LinkedIn is, in fact, a huge opportunity for the sector to compete with other industries.

Given our data and the sector’s reform agenda, **such a change could only help move leaders closer towards their key trust and talent ambitions.**

# 79%

of respondents believe their leaders **lack clarity, confidence and competence** on LinkedIn.

# 65%

of respondents do not believe their leaders **understand the value or potential** of LinkedIn.

# 93%

of respondents believe **their agency would benefit** if their leaders were more active on LinkedIn.

# 86%

of respondents believe **key audiences would benefit** if their leaders were more active on LinkedIn.

Fig 1. Responses from Propel’s Digital Reputation Report: Adviser Survey, conducted between Aug-Sep 2023.

# HUMAN, WORK OR BOTH?

# 45%

According to the *2023 Edelman Trust Barometer*, trust in Government declined seven points to 45%, while trust also declined for Government leaders - down to 41%. A 'state of distrust'.<sup>9</sup>

## TODAY'S AUDIENCES WANT MORE THAN A MEDIA RELEASE - THEY WANT TO SEE THE HUMAN BEHIND THE TITLE.

Our data shows a staggering **80% of posts made by 'very active' leaders focused on 'work' matters:** events, meetings, milestones, announcements, jobs and results.

While some gave a more 'human' take on those work matters (4%), the vast majority simply stuck strictly to business (65%).

Comparatively, only 6% of posts focused on 'human' stories: values, experiences and passions. When you consider the 80% flagged above, that means leaders were **~13x more likely to talk about 'work' than 'human' focused stories on LinkedIn.**

That's a significant difference.

And while the current APS social media guidance does encourage leaders to remain *"impartial and professional"* online, it does not suggest leaders leave their human faces, voices and values at the door.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, a balance of 'work' and 'human' can be very powerful on LinkedIn.

By analysing the data, it turns out bringing a human face to public sector work presents an enormous opportunity for leaders and their teams. And - importantly - it's an approach that is very much in line with social media guidance.

Behind purely human-focussed posts (~900 engagements), **work posts with a human focus generated the second-highest level of public engagement per post** (~415 engagements).

Posts like Susan Pearce's - Secretary at NSW Health - on the following page.

That might be half as impactful as purely human posts, but it is still 3.5x more engaging than purely work posts.

It seems sector leaders can have their cake and eat it, too, on LinkedIn.

They can still talk about work matters, but in a more engaging, human way.

## WINNING BACK PEOPLE’S TRUST IS A KEY CHALLENGE FACING THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS INSTITUTIONS. YET THE ANSWER MAY LIE WITH ITS PEOPLE.

While current guidance is rightly designed to prevent the sector from losing trust, industry sources - like Edelman’s *Trust Barometer* - show the far greater priority is restoring it.<sup>11</sup> **This won’t be achieved on the back of ‘work’ alone** (our next finding will cover the ideas of ‘warmth’ and ‘competence’).

Government - both as an institution (45%) and individual leaders (41%) - faces a distrusting audience. Yet our data shows it is possible to bridge the current gaps by purposefully balancing ‘work’ and ‘human’.

### Humanising the public sector works.

Not through leaders sharing personal or sensitive information - simply by being themselves. The more we see of a leader’s human face, voice and values, the more we are drawn to them.

There are plenty of great examples - like Susan Pearce’s (Fig. 2) - already on LinkedIn.

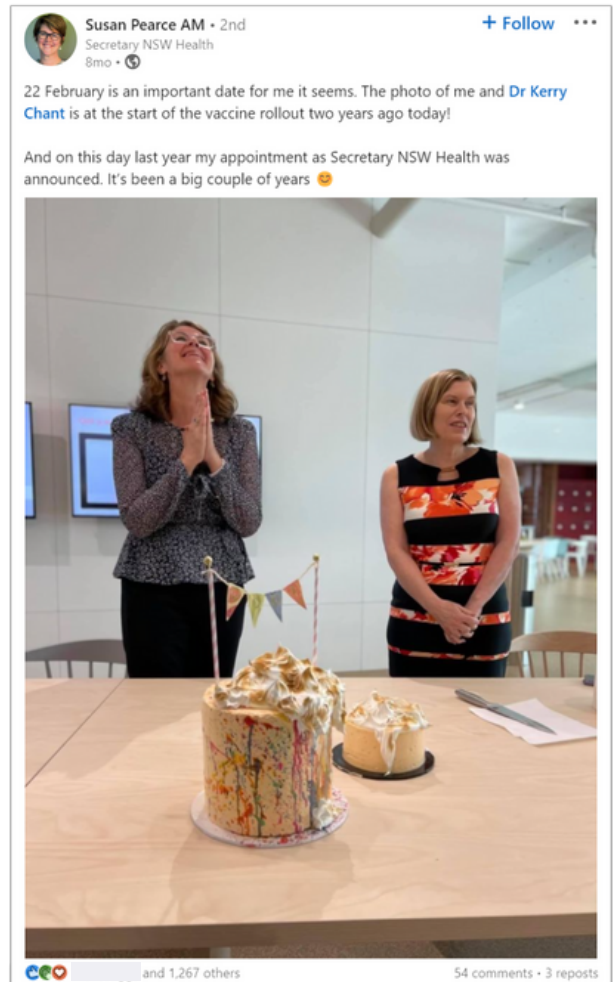


Fig 2. A LinkedIn post from Susan Pearce, Secretary at NSW Health, reflecting on the anniversary of the COVID vaccine roll out and her own appointment.

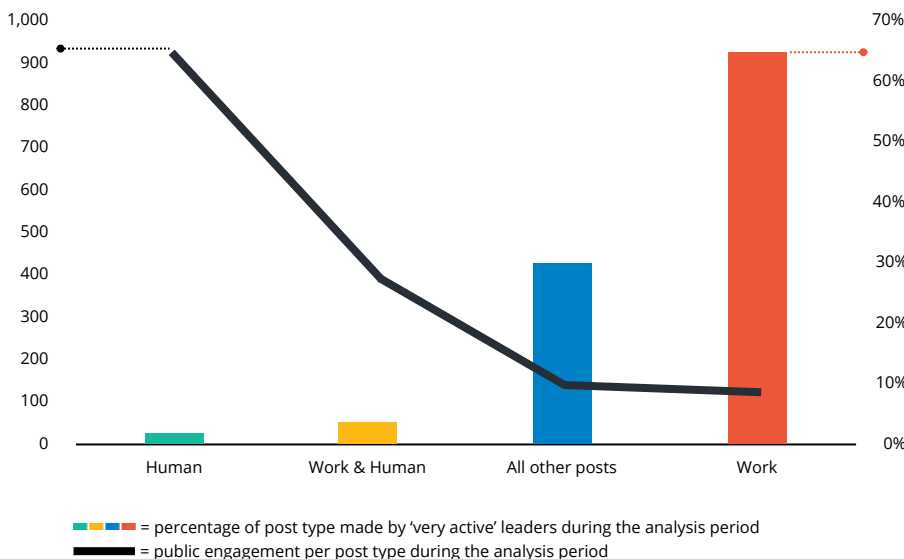


Fig 3. In analysing posts made by ‘very active’ public sector leaders, we observe that purely ‘work’ posts are the most widely used but least effective posting method in terms of generating public engagement.

Conversely, posts featuring both ‘work’ and ‘human’ elements generate 3.5x more public engagement, showing the potential for leaders to remain professional while sharing more of their own face, voice and values.

# GETTING WARMER.

# 4:1

According to Brunswick Group's *Connected Leadership Report*, candidates are 4x more likely to want to work for a leader who is visible and active on social media vs. one who is not.<sup>12</sup>

## TO FULFIL THEIR TRUST AMBITIONS, PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERS MUST BE SEEN AS BOTH 'WARM' AND 'COMPETENT'.

In its quest to build trust and credibility with audiences, the public sector has repeatedly shown its ability to fulfil - and even exceed - expectations.

**But 'competence' is only one half of the trust equation, on and off LinkedIn.**

Deeper analysis of leaders' posts shows how much power rests in their ability to be 'warm' as well as 'competent'.

Our data shows that while purely 'human' posts only make up 2% of 'very active' leaders' efforts, they average a remarkable 900+ public engagements. That's **7.5x more effective than 'work' posts.**

Why are 'human' posts so effective, and what is the link to trust?

In 2002, social psychologist Susan Fiske and her colleagues Amy Cuddy, Peter Glick and Jun Xu developed a framework for how people form impressions of others that has since stood the test of time: the Stereotype Content Model.<sup>13</sup>

The model elevates 'warmth' and 'competence' as two determinants for decision-making, but **reinforces the importance of 'warmth', in particular, to build trust.**

By relying solely on competence, any leader invites risk. Without warmth or connection with audiences, any and every mistake will lead to credibility erosion and distrust. There is no bank of goodwill to draw from.

However, the more we see of a leader's human face, voice and values, the more familiar we become. The more we see the human behind the title, the more we can connect with them and their story.

## LEADERS WHO ARE WILLING TO BE 'WARM' BENEFIT IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE - THEY AMPLIFY POSITIVE CULTURE AND PROTECT AGAINST THE DARK SIDE OF GENERATIVE AI.

LinkedIn has a pivotal role to play.

From our data, the ten most engaged leaders had a 'comment to post' ratio of at least 10:1 - **for every post, they made ten comments. Some were as high as 25:1.**

These leaders show an active interest in their people online. And they appear to connect more deeply through their comments.

No one becomes a Secretary or CEO by chance - competence comes with the title. But warmth is revealed, at scale, through every small-yet-positive interaction online. Tellingly, **every one of the most engaging posts** had a human face or voice behind it.

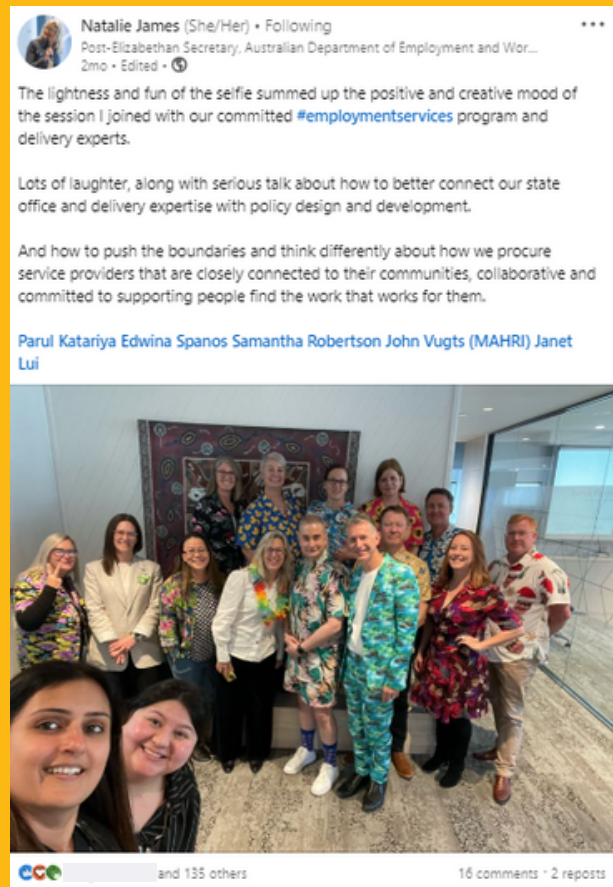
This truth reveals yet another valuable aspect to 'warmth': risk management.

Misinformation, disinformation, deep fakes and fake accounts: these are some of the main worries leaders and their teams have about social media when it is exploited by bad actors.

At a time when damaging content can be created at the click of a button, how can the sector protect its trust ambitions from this very real threat?

Warmth. Familiar human faces, voices and values in posts and comments.

Fake accounts can be countered when leaders have established profiles, voices and networks online. It is those without a presence who invite risk.



*Fig 4. The above example from Natalie James (Secretary at the Commonwealth Department of Employment & Workplace Relations) strikes a humorous and playful tone that is reflected in her comments. Through this consistency, her own authentic voice shines through.*

*But LinkedIn does not require leaders to be 'funny', nor is humour needed for a leader's voice to be distinctive. Others, like Kiersten Fishburn (Secretary at the NSW Dept. of Planning & Environment), capture that same authenticity by sharing openly and honestly.*

*Her post detailing the lessons she learned from her breast cancer diagnosis and treatment spoke from the heart, revealing: "Sometimes you need to have gone through the worst to find your best."*

*This post generated the second-highest number of public engagements of any leader post during the analysis window.*

# VISIBILITY MATTERS.

# 4/5

Our data shows that of the ten leaders with the highest comment-to-post ratios, four also feature in the top five who generate most public engagements per post.

## **PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERS' CHOICES AND ACTIONS ONLINE "SET THE TONE" FOR THE REST OF THEIR ORGANISATIONS.**

From our research, it is clear to see those leaders who have fostered a culture of empowerment, ideas sharing and constructive discussion through their own actions on LinkedIn. These leaders display 'public service' by taking the time to listen, learn and respond.

Our data shows that **of the ten leaders with the highest comment-to-post ratios, four also feature in the top five who generate most public engagements per post.**

When leaders contribute to their online communities, their communities respond and feel empowered to speak up themselves.

### **Leaders set the tone.**

This is the same wording captured in the current APS social media guidance: *"As a leader, you set the tone for the rest of your organisation, and should be relied upon to act as an exemplar to your staff, your organisation, and your broader networks."*<sup>14</sup>

As exemplars, how powerful is it when leaders don't just post, but recognise, engage and celebrate their people in comments and replies?

Leaders show their teams how they, too, can participate safely and effectively online by simply reflecting the values and behaviours expected of public servants.

In the context of social media guidance, staff empowerment and trust building, there is no doubting visibility matters.

**But there is another, possibly even more important aspect, given the sector's talent and trust ambitions.**

## AS THE SECTOR AIMS TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN DIVERSE TALENT THAT REFLECTS OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES, ONE VOICE IS NEVER ENOUGH. REPRESENTATION MATTERS.

In describing the 'representation challenge', Monash University outlines a solution: *"The best antidote is **the intervention of "trusted messengers"** who provide reliable information to community members on the forums and platforms that they visit."* <sup>15</sup>

**Leaders cannot be everything to everyone**, but their actions can greatly influence others to speak up themselves. The comments under this post (see right) from Mike Kaiser (Director-General at the Qld Dept. of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government & Planning) show how.

When leaders are visible and empower their teams to get active online, **they unlock an immensely rich and diverse chorus of public sector voices.**


Rather than relying on one voice, an agency's activities and ideas are shared via diverse voices to diverse communities.

The messenger and the message match the intended audience. And, by being visible and active, **leaders set off an online chain reaction that goes well beyond their own spheres of influence.**

 Mike Kaiser • 1st  
Director General - Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local G...  
2mo • Edited • 

Who doesn't love karaoke? Relevance for LinkedIn? I dunno. Work life balance? 🙄



 and 321 others

39 comments • 1 repost



THE PUBLIC SECTOR IS FULL OF PURPOSE-LED LEADERS AND TEAM MEMBERS. **WE STAND TO GAIN A LOT IF THAT SENSE OF PURPOSE IS COMMUNICATED EFFECTIVELY.** IT HELPS WITH RECRUITMENT, WITH RETENTION, WITH CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION...AND THEREFORE WITH PRODUCTIVITY.

### Mike Kaiser

Director-General at the Queensland Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government & Planning





# PURPOSE, STRATEGY.

# 96%

Our data shows that almost 80% of all leaders analysed contributed just 4% of all original posts during the analysis period. That means roughly 20% of leaders generated 96% of all original posts.

## A CLEAR PURPOSE WILL ENSURE LEADERS GAIN THE CONFIDENCE THEY NEED TO DRIVE PERFORMANCE AND REDUCE RISK.

Our data has already shown that nearly 80% of public sector leaders said very little or nothing at all on LinkedIn during the six month analysis window.

That equates to a total of 17 original posts (4%) from 89 leaders who, collectively, have almost 85,000 followers waiting to hear from them.

**Conversely, that means roughly 20% of leaders analysed generated 96% of all original posts.** It's the old 80/20 rule on steroids.

But what is happening to create such a divide between the active and the dormant - the vocal and the silent?

Over the past decade, Propel has seen a consistent pattern of behaviour among leaders of all sectors on LinkedIn:

**Clarity drives confidence. Confidence drives authenticity. Authenticity drives connection. Connection drives performance.**

While we are not privy to the strategies of all 100+ leaders analysed, we observe that those with the most consistent voices and audience engagement appear to be driven by a clear purpose.

Based on the data analysed, those leaders outperforming their peers on key LinkedIn metrics are not only clear in their purpose, but also how best to use LinkedIn to build trust and connection with audiences.

The opportunity for others is to observe, reflect and set a clear path ahead.

## THE SECRETARIES' CHARTER OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS SETS OUT THE EXPECTATIONS SECRETARIES HAVE OF THEMSELVES, AND WANT TO SEE AT ALL LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP.<sup>16</sup>

It refers to diversity and inclusion, integrity and accountability, listening and relationship building, empowerment and trust. All wonderful traits of leadership that, when portrayed, provide tangible reminders of the value the public service brings to the table.

### Imagine the impact if 14+ million Australian LinkedIn users were exposed to that leadership online every day?

Imagine if 80% - not 20% - were sharing regular stories of people across the public service and their successes?

Current follower numbers and cut-through levels would be transformed. Using our high performers as a reference point, if the 20% of posters became 80% of all leaders, the cohort would be closer to reaching 600,000 followers and 500,000+ public engagements in six months. **Try keeping talent out of the sector with that level of reach and influence.**

Yes, our data shows LinkedIn remains largely dormant or underutilised to the majority of public sector leaders right now. **But that should be exciting.**

It highlights the enormous potential awaiting those leaders who are now willing to step up to the digital plate.

Just as a leader's purpose should be clear and unique, it is vital to remember that LinkedIn requires its own unique strategy, too. **What works on other communication channels won't work on LinkedIn**, and leaders and teams must also work together to shift the focus from institutional-led content to individual voice.

They must simply **make time to define the impact they would like to have, and the resources they need to get there.** This report is full of examples and data that will light the way.

The final chapters outline the new rulebook leaders must learn and follow, along with how they can best execute on LinkedIn.

With this guidance and armed with a rich resource in this report, all leaders should be far better placed to access the immense power of their human face, voice and values as assets on LinkedIn.



THE WAY THAT JIM [BETTS] HAS SHARED THINGS AND BEEN VERY OPEN ABOUT PAST STRUGGLES...AND HOW HE HAS CHANGED THE DYNAMIC...**IT MAKES ME WANT TO GO TO WORK EVERY DAY.**

**IT'S JUST BEING A HUMAN.** THE BARRIERS HAVE GONE, WHICH HAS BEEN REALLY NICE.

### Danielle Maidens

Assistant Director for Policy Implementation at the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (in reference to Jim Betts, Secretary at the Department)



# A NEW RULEBOOK.



## LINKEDIN PRESENTS NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERS AND THEIR TEAMS. BUT IT ALSO CHALLENGES SECTOR CONVENTIONS THAT HAVE ALWAYS PLACED 'INSTITUTIONS' BEFORE 'INDIVIDUALS'.

Of the nearly ~1,000 posts made by public sector leaders during the analysis period, it is an almost even 50/50 split between original content and reposts (471 reposts to 469 original posts).

Deeper analysis shows a significant number of the reposts leaders made were of posts originally shared by that leader's agency Company Page on LinkedIn.

In the context of public sector communications, this is not surprising: the focus has always been on the work, not the worker.

It also makes sense that leaders would want to acknowledge the original source by reposting, rather than creating a new post.

**But this approach does not work on LinkedIn, for a few key reasons.**

By adopting an agency-first approach to posting, leaders are inadvertently limiting the reach and influence of important messages and agency initiatives.

According to research conducted by LinkedIn expert Richard van der Blom, **organic Company Page posts only make up 3% of the content a user sees in their LinkedIn feed.**<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, Propel's own client research has found that **reposted content can, in some cases, result in 250x lower reach than the original post.**<sup>18</sup>

These numbers are important as they reveal a risk in the current strategy many leaders and their teams appear to be taking on LinkedIn. Whether posting a job opportunity, recognising a colleague or sharing good news - relying on an agency's Company Page posts or reposting Company Page posts greatly restricts leaders' effectiveness online.

**These statistics highlight just one aspect leaders must understand to be effective on LinkedIn**, and how they can be better set up to capitalise on them. In the next section of this report ('The Opportunity') we'll explain other key learnings and how to harness them.

# THE OPPORTUNITY.



**"SOCIAL MEDIA IS NOW A FUNDAMENTAL PART OF HOW WE CONNECT AND ENGAGE WITH ONE ANOTHER.**

**IT HAS BECOME CENTRAL TO THE WAY WE SHARE NEWS, IDEAS, AND INTERESTS; HOW WE MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS; AND HOW WE EXPRESS OUR IDENTITIES AND ROLES IN OUR COMMUNITIES." <sup>19</sup>**

This statement comes from the APS social media guidance referenced earlier in this report, recognising how embedded social media platforms like LinkedIn are to every day life.

Statements like this serve as a powerful reminder of the need to start a new conversation about what the sector might gain from reconsidering the role of LinkedIn.

**You've read about the urgency.**

Trust in government continues its steady decline. The rise of generative AI and bad actors presents new threats.

The talent the sector needs is already looking online, and influenced by what they see - or don't see.

**You've also read about the opportunity.**

A greater focus on human stories, and strategy and training to empower more leaders on LinkedIn would unlock a plethora of benefits that have, to this point, been largely out of reach.

Content that is 4x more effective. Audiences that are 3.5x larger. Engagement levels that are 5x higher. All valuable ingredients in the recipe for restoring trust and connection.

But these are just the ingredients. The end results - trust, credibility, connection, talent, ideas, innovation - are what the sector craves. LinkedIn is not the answer, but it is a key tool for the modern leader's toolkit.

Leaders need to feel comfortable engaging as individuals - their faces, voices and values. Their actions will activate and amplify a diverse and vibrant workforce. Because the opportunity is not LinkedIn. The opportunity is - and always has been - the sector's greatest resource: **its people.**

**Roger Christie**  
Managing Director, Propel

# ACTIONING THE REPORT.

**FOR LEADERS LOOKING TO HARNESS THE OPPORTUNITIES LINKEDIN PROVIDES, THERE IS ONE CLEAR MESSAGE: MAKE TIME TO CONSIDER WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE, WHO MATTERS, AND HOW TO TAP INTO YOUR OWN AUTHENTIC VOICE.**

Where should leaders start with LinkedIn to ensure they are limiting risk, shaping a presence that resonates with key audiences, and using platform features in an effective, efficient way? The following five recommendations are based on the research findings, and will help leaders harness their human face, voice and values online.

1

## AUDIT & ENHANCE YOUR LINKEDIN PRESENCE.

First impressions count and - if you have one - your LinkedIn profile will be high up the search rankings. Review your current profile, checking: does your profile reflect your credentials, values and passions? Does it express your 'why' as a leader? If you're not sure how to improve and personalise your LinkedIn profile, skip to step 2 and come back after.

2

## SET A CLEAR PURPOSE: GOALS, AUDIENCES, PASSIONS.

Without a clear purpose for LinkedIn, you expose yourself to risk. **Propel's Purpose Pyramid** is a simple, free framework you can use to define: what you're working towards; who your key audiences are and what matters to them; and your personal passions. This framework informs *everything* you do on LinkedIn - make time to find that clarity.

3

## BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE AND COMPETENCE.

To feel *confident* on LinkedIn, you need to feel *comfortable* on LinkedIn. You certainly can't outsource everything and still meet your trust and talent ambitions. Beyond those in this report, get help sourcing other relevant examples from LinkedIn - what do they do, how and why? Use these to refine your efforts, reflect your own voice and values.

4

## LEARN THE SYSTEM: LINKEDIN'S ALGORITHM.

It pays to know what button to press, when and why. Adding connections you don't know, tagging the same people, reposting - choices like these can greatly impact your performance. To ensure you get return on effort, it's worth knowing the system. Ask for help if you're not sure.

5

## LISTEN, PARTICIPATE, THEN POST.

The most relieving message from the data is that you don't need to *post* all the time. Regular *participation* - comments and reactions - is far more powerful. Start by listening. Spend time engaging with others. Post when you have something to say. Trust and talent will come.

# THE WAY FORWARD.



## THE TRUTH IS, CURATING AN EFFECTIVE DIGITAL REPUTATION IS NOW AN INESCAPABLE PART OF GOOD PUBLIC LEADERSHIP.

This skill is bench strength stuff now, core to our work as leaders in the public space.

**The report findings are encouraging and troubling at the same time.** There's clearly social media activity and engagement across the leadership cohort, but it isn't as consistent and creative as it needs to become. Hopefully we're on that path.

We're only just beginning to discover the power and potential of social media, including LinkedIn, as part of the way leaders can forge "intimacy at scale".

To be honest, when I first started using social media, I was sceptical about its value. But this changed when I was given portfolios that were vital but less high profile than say Treasury, Health, Transport, Education and Policing.

While mainstream media were not always engaged in day-to-day pain points, people on social media, especially LinkedIn, were acutely aware of the 'process trauma' associated with government.

When I experienced frustration with a government process, I would post about it. Sometimes I would have a solution as it was within my control as a Minister. Sometimes it was simply to express my frustration at the lack of progress. Occasionally, I would also post pain points seen through the lens of others, such as my mum.

## Being prepared to show that human, personal dimension has to be part of the magic.

The LinkedIn community was particularly helpful, as members would regularly provide constructive comments and inspiration for potential solutions.

The platform also gave me an opportunity to publish some thought leadership pieces to a highly informed and engaged audience. I never would have had the opportunity to publish 2,000 words in mainstream media.

The LinkedIn community has grown into a formidable tribe of advocates, who are seeking to improve government service delivery. **That's an asset any effective public leader needs to understand and engage.**

---

**The Hon. Victor Dominello**  
Co-Founder, ServiceGen



**Roger Christie**  
**Managing Director, Propel**

[rchristie@propelgroup.com.au](mailto:rchristie@propelgroup.com.au)  
+61 431 718 018

**Contact Roger** to discuss the findings of the report, how your leader compares to industry benchmarks, and how you can protect and enhance your own or your leader's digital reputation.



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**GET IN TOUCH.**

# ABOUT THIS REPORT.

## HOW VISIBLE & CONFIDENT ARE OUR MOST SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS ON LINKEDIN?

This was the key question we sought to answer after hundreds of anecdotal conversations with sector leaders and their teams about LinkedIn and its role within the public service.

Particularly, to observe whether leaders' usage showed an understanding of the value LinkedIn could provide in helping the sector achieve its key ambitions linked to trust and talent.

With the expert research support of the University of Technology Sydney, Propel reviewed the activities of more than 100 Secretaries, CEOs and Directors-General on LinkedIn between 1 March and 31 August 2023.

The 113 leaders observed were sourced from teams across the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australian and Western Australian who provided leader names.

The cohort observed were selected from those departments or agencies with the highest number of employees, as representative of those who would likely have the greatest need to use LinkedIn.

The leaders observed did not provide our research team access to their profiles or data, meaning we only captured and analysed publicly available LinkedIn data either instigated by - or in response to - leaders' efforts (e.g. posts made by leaders, comments from their followers).

A focus on this public data is beneficial, as it is the content that has the largest potential public reach. This included analysing public posts, reactions, comments, and reposts. No private data or activities were captured.

We assessed leaders according to their activity levels, defined as follows:

- **Very active:** average of 3+ authored posts (not reposts) per month;
- **Moderately active:** average of 1-2 authored posts (not reposts) per month;
- **Rarely active:** average of fewer than 1 authored post (not reposts) per month;
- **Dormant/inactive:** no authored posts.

For very active leaders, we conducted further thematic analysis to understand the most common types of posts shared, classified as:

- **Work** (e.g. events, projects);
- **Stakeholder recognition** (e.g. celebrating staff);
- **Social issues** (e.g. diversity and inclusion);
- **Human** (e.g. personal experiences);
- **Public service announcements** (e.g. disaster communications);
- **Other.**

We requested comments on our findings from select leaders who were among the 'high performers' in our analysis. These leaders were not shown their own or peers' data, and were asked a series of standard questions for response over email, presented as quotes in this report.

Our research focused on LinkedIn as it is widely considered the safest and most accessible social media platform, and because it has fewer regulatory and privacy considerations than other mainstream platforms available to public sector leaders.

We believed it would therefore likely provide the most accurate picture of leaders visibility and confidence online.

We are unable to comment on - and do not assess - any private or flow on activities leaders experience as a result of their public LinkedIn activities. While we are not privy to leaders' strategies for using LinkedIn, we have drawn conclusions based on trends and patterns in our data.

With regard to 'effective' use, we define successful leadership on LinkedIn at a baseline as:

*'Consistently publishing content and participating in conversations which generates high levels of engagement, indicating alignment and affinity with key audiences.'*

Finally, the survey referenced on page 18 refers to a standalone anonymous online survey conducted by Propel between August and September 2023. Fourteen respondents provided answers, ranging from 1-10+ years in the public service.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

**THIS REPORT - ITS DATA AND QUALITY GUIDANCE - IS THE PRODUCT OF MANY WONDERFUL AND GENEROUS MINDS FROM THE SOCIAL MEDIA, PUBLIC SECTOR AND ACADEMIC WORLDS.**

Last year, my wife and colleague Gemma and I launched the very first **Digital Reputation Report** - an analysis of the way ASX200 CEOs used LinkedIn.<sup>20</sup> It was an ambitious project for two people running a small advisory firm, but the findings - and subsequent awareness of LinkedIn's power for leaders - justified the effort.

Still, we knew we would never do it again...

Not without the support of key people - specialists and experts who, like us, had a desire to help the very best leaders use LinkedIn more purposefully for the benefit of themselves, their organisations and stakeholders. The report you've just read is living proof that we found those key people.

They are the ones we must thank for now having the first in-depth analysis of this kind, exploring the ways our most senior public servants use LinkedIn.

Because of their input, I am certain more leaders will now see LinkedIn - and its potential to support the sector's trust and talent ambitions - in a whole new light.

**Martin Stewart-Weeks** has been integral to the ideation, content, development and tone of this report. His understanding of the sector, its aspirations, its nuances and its potential has been essential. Without Martin's wise and considered counsel - in amongst his many competing priorities - this report would not exist. I'm incredibly thankful for his co-authorship and partnership more broadly.

**Jim Macnamara and Emily Booth** at the University of Technology Sydney have been research powerhouses, who have contributed a rigour and professionalism to this report that simply could not have been matched without them. Their commitment to accuracy and excellence has only been matched by their willingness to collaborate and create richer ideas. The quality of the report you've read is a testament to their research capability.

Government or otherwise, **The Hon. Victor Dominello** is often held up as a benchmark for leaders on LinkedIn. His contribution to our report provides another, more personal proof point for the potential that awaits sector leaders, and why it's so important to humanise your face and voice. I'm grateful to have such an encouraging 'call to arms' to conclude our report.

**Gemma Christie** has, and continues to be, the most wondrous source of energy and ideas for all things Propel. The pages of this report are littered with her dedicated and loving fingerprints. Without her knowledge of this domain, creativity, and seemingly endless patience for the process - not to mention shepherding our three kids on evenings when report pages wouldn't write themselves - the true impact of this data would have been lost. She is immense.

And finally to you, **the reader**. Your time is precious, and I sincerely hope this report has been eye-opening for you. Whether you are a leader, adviser or other hat wearer in the public service - I'm grateful you've explored the data and hope it is a resource you keep coming back to. May it help you start a new conversation in your agency or department, and I genuinely look forward to hearing just how much of an impact you and your leaders have by sharing your own human face, voice and values with audiences online.

**Roger Christie**  
Managing Director, Propel

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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS.

- **Activity level:** in this context, how regularly a leader uses LinkedIn to post original content via their own profile.
- **Algorithm:** the system LinkedIn uses to select and display posts and updates for its users based on all available individual, company and advertising content on the platform.
- **Average:** in this context, the 'mean' public sector leader performance across a range of standard LinkedIn metrics.
- **Comment:** a response or reply made by a LinkedIn user in relation to another user's original post, situated under the original post.
- **Comment-to-post ratio:** the number of comments a LinkedIn user makes, relative to the number of original posts that same user makes. This ratio is often used to gauge whether leaders are using LinkedIn as a 'community' or 'broadcast' platform.
- **Company Page:** the LinkedIn page only available to organisations. These pages have different functionality to individual profiles, and do not enjoy the same levels of reach and exposure.
- **Connections:** similar to 'followers', but a LinkedIn connection requires a two-way exchange and acceptance process. LinkedIn connections can communicate freely with one another on the platform, and see one another's content in the feed.
- **Deep fakes:** online content that digitally alters a person's face or body, typically used maliciously or to spread false information.
- **Digital reputation:** your digital reputation is the impression others take from information you - and others - post about you online.
- **Disinformation:** false information which is intended to mislead, deceive and have a detrimental impact on its intended targets.
- **Dormant:** (or 'inactive') refers to 'activity level' - in this context, having a LinkedIn profile but not posting original content in the analysis window.
- **Engagement:** the regular, equal and free-flowing two-way exchange of ideas and interactions online.
- **Fake profiles:** online profiles created by users with the intent to deceive or cause harm to the true profile owner and their stakeholders.
- **Feed:** (or 'home feed') where LinkedIn displays information for its users, driven by the algorithm.
- **Followers:** the number of people who choose to 'follow' another LinkedIn user, without requiring a connection request.
- **Generative AI:** refers to the use of AI to create new content, like text, images, music, audio and videos.
- **Human:** in this context, posts that focus on personal experiences and values.
- **LinkedIn:** the largest professional social network, with over 1 billion global users.
- **LinkedIn activities:** the sum of all actions and choices a LinkedIn user makes on the platform.
- **LinkedIn personas:** in this context, a way to classify the different, common approaches leaders use on LinkedIn.
- **LinkedIn profile:** an individual's own LinkedIn profile where they post and connect, distinct from a Company Page.
- **Listening:** the practice of actively monitoring conversations online.
- **Misinformation:** false information which - while not intentional - can have a detrimental impact on audiences.
- **Post:** the standard way to create and share original content on LinkedIn.
- **Public engagement:** the sum of reactions, comments and reposts generated on a post by LinkedIn users.
- **Purpose:** the 'why' for using LinkedIn.
- **Purpose Pyramid:** Propel's strategic framework to help leaders define their 'why' and limit reputational risk.
- **Reach:** how many people *may* see a user's post in their LinkedIn feed.
- **Reaction:** the simplest response to a post or comment (e.g. like, celebrate).
- **Repost:** either with or without added content, resharing another user's post.
- **Social media guidance:** in this context, the APS-recommended social media approach for public servants.
- **Tagging:** using the '@' symbol to recognise a LinkedIn user in a post.
- **Work:** in this context, posts that focus on work activities and announcements.

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