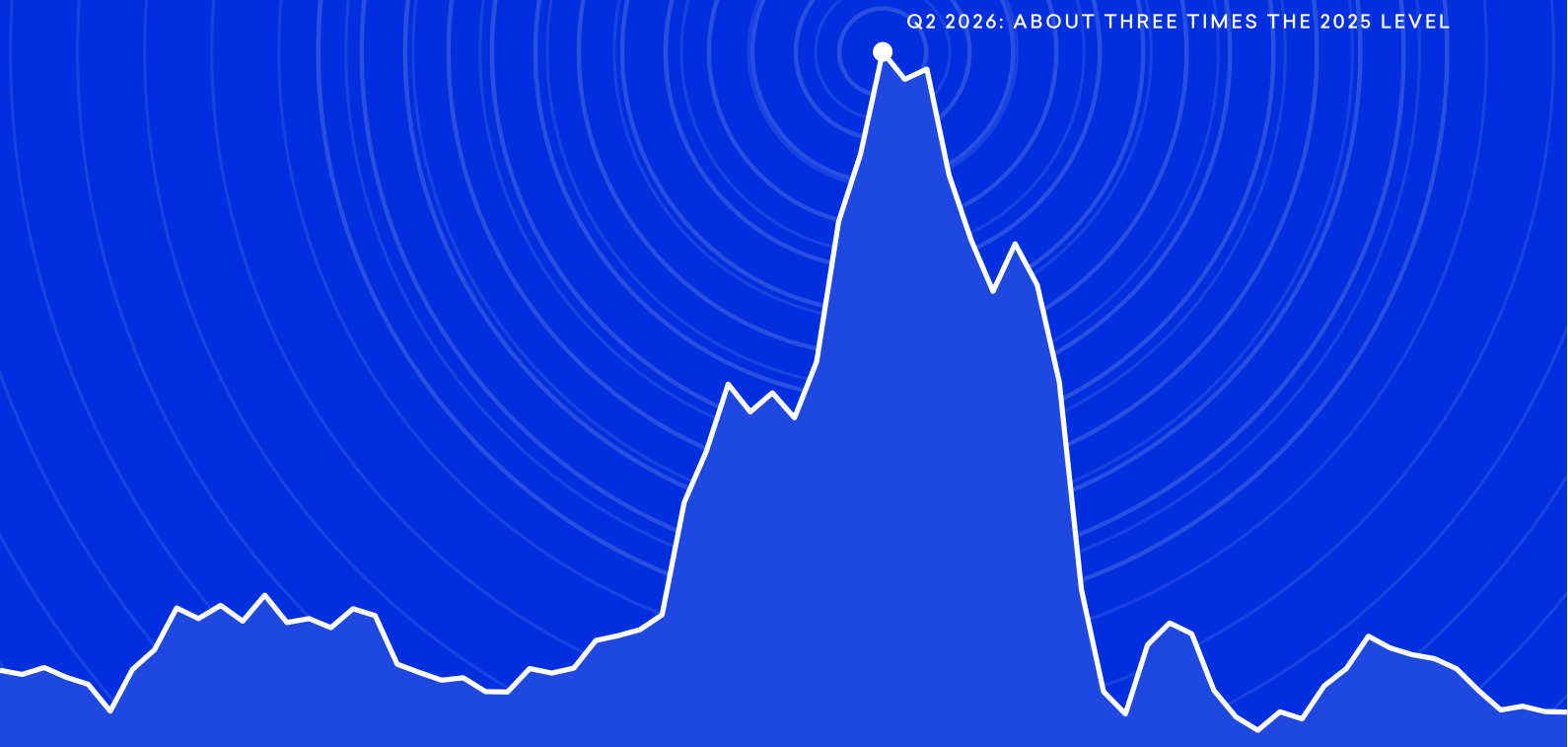
willow

2026 State of SME LinkedIn

LinkedIn reach doubled in spring. By summer it was back where it started.

What two years of company page posts by Willow clients, mostly small firms in Belgium and the Netherlands, tell us about LinkedIn in 2026, and what to do about it in 2027.



Six numbers that sum up 2026.

Reach per post peaked at 2.3 times its level of a year earlier.

The peak ran from February to June 2026, while LinkedIn was rebuilding its feed.

By Q3, reach per post was back where it was in Q3 2025, at −1%.

49% of firms gained and 51% lost, so the spring boost left no lasting gain.

Engagement rate went from 2.5% to 1.2%, and back to 2.3%.

The extra spring reach went to people who scrolled past: likes and comments barely moved.

Posting at least weekly reached 2.2 times as many people.

Same firm, over a quarter, compared with posting once a month or less.

Partners' own posts earned 46% more engagement than the company page.

Same firms, 2026. People respond more readily to someone they know.

After two months of silence, the first posts back reached 97% of what they did before.

A quiet spell is never a reason not to restart. The cost is the posts that weren't made.

ABOUT THE DATA

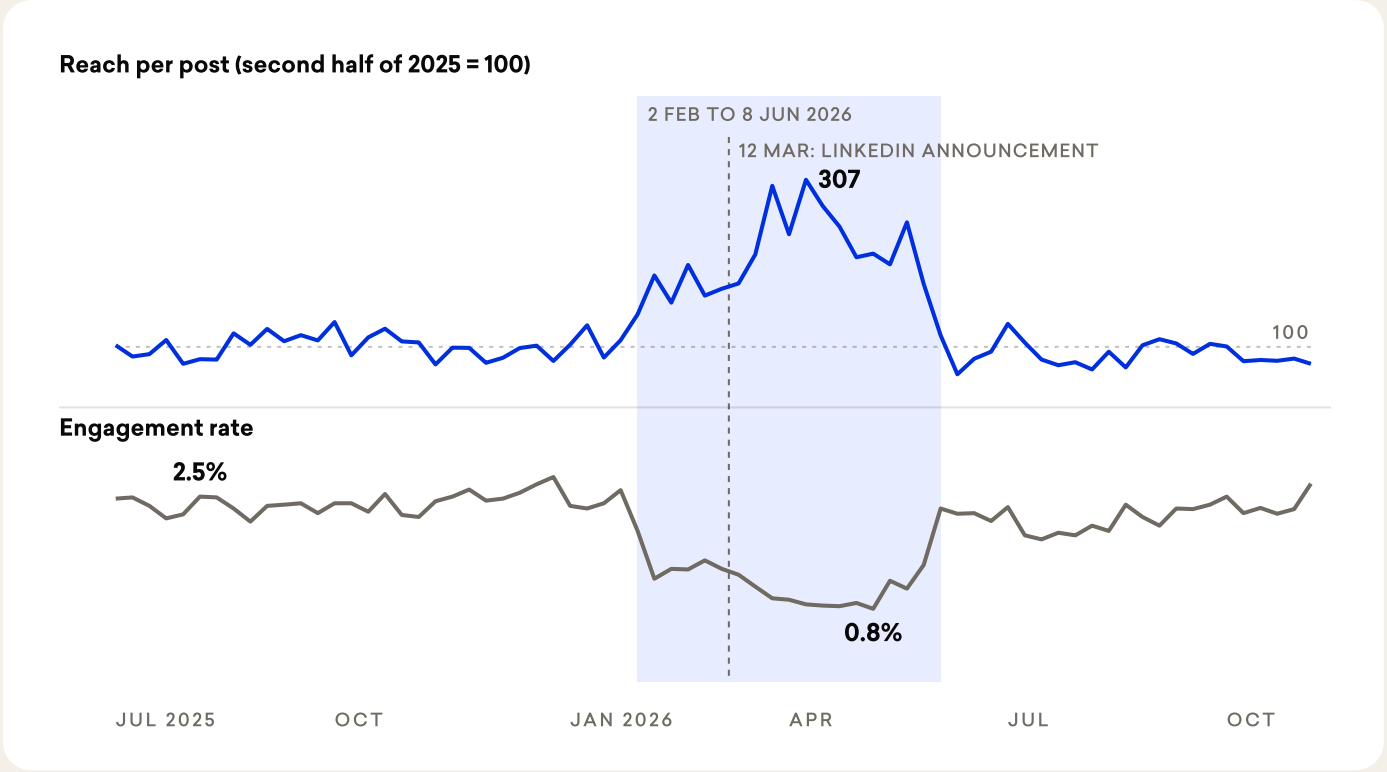
Most of this report follows the Willow clients that posted on their company page in every quarter, mostly small firms in Belgium and the Netherlands. Following the same pages means a change in the numbers reflects LinkedIn, not who was counted.

LinkedIn turned the volume up, then down again.

Through 2025, company page reach was steady. Of the people who saw a post, 2% to 3% reacted to it. In the first week of February 2026 that changed. Reach per post began to climb, and by April a typical post reached about three times as many people as in late 2025 (Figure 1).

We attribute the surge to LinkedIn's rebuild of its feed. On 12 March LinkedIn announced new ranking models and said the changes were already rolling out; our data suggests since early February. LinkedIn has published no reach figures or rollout dates, so we can't tie it to one announced change.

FIGURE 1 · WEEKLY REACH PER POST AND ENGAGEMENT RATE



The extra reach was not extra attention. Likes, comments and shares per post hardly moved, so the engagement rate fell below 1%. Our reading is that LinkedIn was trying posts out on audiences well beyond a page's followers, and most of them scrolled past.

It didn't last. In the first two weeks of June reach fell back, and the engagement rate recovered the same week, most likely because LinkedIn narrowed that wider distribution again. Against Q3 2025, the typical firm's reach per post in Q3 2026 was flat, but likes, comments and shares per post were 7% lower. That was not a few firms pulling the figure down: 57% of firms got fewer reactions per post than a year earlier.

Going quiet costs the posts you didn't make.

Many small firms post in bursts. We looked at every gap of eight weeks or more between company page posts across our client base. **The first posts after a silence reached as many people as the posts before it** (Figure 2), so a firm that stopped can simply start again.

The cost shows up later. Two months after a comeback, reach per post was 16% lower, and over a year firms that posted irregularly lost 21% while regular posters held steady. A firm that drifts may also post different things, so this is a pattern, not proof.

FIGURE 2 · REACH PER POST VS BEFORE, SAME FIRM

COMPARISON	REACH PER POST
First eight weeks after a silence of eight weeks or more	−3%
Weeks nine to sixteen after the silence	−16%
Q3 2026 vs Q3 2025, firms that posted every quarter	−1%
Q3 2026 vs Q3 2025, firms that posted irregularly	−21%

Compared with the same firm before the silence, or with its own Q3 2025.

The bigger cost is the posts that weren't made. **Reach per post barely changes with volume**, so what a firm reaches over a quarter follows how often it posts (Figure 3). It falls steeply below one post a week and levels off above it.

Our advice to Willow clients is therefore to post at least once a week.

FIGURE 3 · REACH BY POSTING RHYTHM, SAME FIRM

POSTS IN THE QUARTER	REACH PER POST	REACH OVER THE QUARTER
The firm's own average quarter	0%	0%
1 or 2 (a post a month or less)	0%	−53%
3 to 6 (once or twice a month)	+11%	−22%
7 to 12 (every week or two)	+7%	+3%
13 to 25 (once or twice a week)	−4%	+17%
26 or more (more than twice a week)	−5%	+19%

Each firm is compared with its own average quarter, the first row.

People outperform the company page.

People beat the logo. Where a partner or founder also posts from their own profile, the profile earned **41% to 46% more** likes, comments and shares per post than the company page, in 2025 and 2026. We attribute this to how LinkedIn spreads the two: a person's post reaches their own connections, who respond more readily to someone they know. LinkedIn reports no impressions for profiles, so this is engagement only.

People make the difference on the company page too. Every post in Willow carries a category: educational, employees and workplace, promotional, personal or entertaining. Educational is the default, so we also read captions for people and team wording. **Posts that name, tag or show people got 12% more impressions** than the page's typical post (Figure 4). They are the posts only the firm can make, and the people in them react and carry them into their own networks.

FIGURE 4 · IMPRESSIONS BY TOPIC · 2026

WHAT THE POST IS ABOUT	IMPRESSIONS
Names, tags or shows people	+12%
of which in the employees and workplace category	+33%
Educational category, no people	−17%
Promotional category, no people	−19%

0% is the page's typical post in the same quarter.

Format (what a post is made of: a photo, a video, a carousel, plain text or a link) **matters less than most advice suggests** (Figure 5). The exception is link-only posts, as LinkedIn prefers to keep readers on LinkedIn. That penalty is shrinking, from 40% fewer impressions in 2025 to 26% in Q3 2026, and may shrink further in 2027: LinkedIn brought back pinned comments in October, a sign it is making room for links rather than pushing them out.

FIGURE 5 · IMPRESSIONS BY FORMAT

FORMAT	2025	Q3 2026
Video	+7%	+7%
Photo or image	+5%	0%
Carousel	+15%	−1%
Text only	−12%	0%
Link to an article or website	−40%	−26%

What normal looks like now.

Compare this winter with last spring and almost every page will look as if it is failing: so far in Q4, 95% of regular posters have lower reach per post than in Q2. **We would use Q3 2026 as the baseline instead**; early Q4 is close to it. Figure 6 shows the spread.

Impressions depend on page size. In our separate study of 374 pages, a typical post reached about 120 people on a page with 100 to 249 followers, 250 with 500 to 999, and 1,300 with 10,000 or more. So the lowest 25% in Figure 6 is roughly a page with under 1,000 followers, and the highest 25% closer to 10,000. That is why **the engagement rate is the fairest line to compare yourself on**.

FIGURE 6 · COMPANY PAGES, SPREAD ACROSS FIRMS · Q3 2026

METRIC	LOWEST 25%	MIDDLE	HIGHEST 25%
Impressions per post	230 or fewer	510	1,204 or more
Likes, comments and shares per post	3.5 or fewer	12.6	25.3 or more
Engagement rate	**1.6% or lower**	**2.3%**	**2.9% or higher**
Posts in the quarter	13 or fewer	22	42 or more

Keeping the rhythm when nobody has time to write.

Since February 2026, Willow Create has drafted ready-to-publish posts for clients to approve. Firms that started using it posted far more consistently, and their reach over a quarter rose while firms without Create slipped.

Each drafted post still reached fewer people than the firm's own. The difference is in what the posts show: 74% of firms' own posts carry a real photo or video of their people and work, against 31% of Create posts, which lean on designed graphics. Own posts also tag someone more often, 9% against 3%. Real faces and tagged colleagues pull a post into more feeds, as page 05 shows.

That is why a mix works best. Among Create users, reach over a quarter grew 66% where Create made up less than 25% of posts, and 18% where it made up 25% to 60%. Firms that relied on Create for most of their posts held level, at −5%. Firms that keep writing their own may also simply be more engaged, but the message is the same: Create keeps the rhythm, and the firm's own posts give it reach.

51% → 81%
WEEKS WITH A POST

+83%
POSTS PER QUARTER

+23%
REACH OVER A QUARTER · WITHOUT CREATE −4%

LinkedIn is also where AI looks.

More and more buyers ask ChatGPT, Google's AI answers, Perplexity or Claude before they search. Those tools quote LinkedIn more than almost any other site. In a Semrush study of 325,000 prompts earlier this year, LinkedIn appeared in about 11% of AI answers, second only to Reddit (Figure 7).

What gets quoted is not what goes viral. Most cited LinkedIn content comes from individuals rather than company pages: 59% on ChatGPT and Google's AI Mode. And 75% of cited authors had posted at least five times in the previous four weeks.

It also shapes what people see when they look you up. In September, Google showed an AI summary for 83% of US searches for a brand name, and LinkedIn was one of the three sites those summaries quoted most, after Wikipedia and YouTube. A prospect who googles your firm may well read your LinkedIn page before your website.

FIGURE 7 · SHARE OF AI ANSWERS THAT CITE LINKEDIN · EARLY 2026

AI TOOL	ANSWERS CITING LINKEDIN
ChatGPT Search	14.3%
Google AI Mode	13.5%
Perplexity	5.3%

Source: Semrush, LinkedIn AI visibility study, March 2026.

The habits that help in the feed are the ones that help here. With our clients we focus on four things: partners posting from their own profiles; a weekly rhythm; posts only the firm can write, with its own figures, client cases and experience, which an AI tool can't produce itself; and one consistent story across the company page and every partner profile, with the same services, sector and location, so that AI tools connect the people to the firm.

HANDLE WITH CARE

These studies mostly use English-language prompts from the US or worldwide, and Belgian or Dutch questions may draw on different sources. The tools change where they look from one month to the next, most of the research comes from companies that sell AI-visibility tools, and it can take a long time before new posts are picked up: in one Ahrefs study, the median page ChatGPT cited was about 500 days old. What holds across the studies: AI tools trust what others say about a firm more than what it says itself, and LinkedIn is one of those places; and they favour people and firms that show up consistently, with the same expertise, everywhere. **That is a reason to start now, not to wait: what you post this year is what AI tools can quote next year.**

What to do in 2027.

This is what we advise our clients.

01 **Post every week, and if you've gone quiet, simply start again.**

Weekly posting reached twice as many people over a quarter, and the first posts after a silence did as well as before. Plan a month of posts in one sitting and the rhythm looks after itself.

02 **Get a partner or founder posting from their own profile.**

Their posts earned 41% to 46% more engagement than the company page. Start with whoever already enjoys talking about the work.

03 **Put your people in the posts.**

Posts that show the team got 12% more impressions. Think of a new colleague, an anniversary or a client event, named or tagged with their permission.

04 **Measure 2027 against Q3 2026, not the spring peak.**

Spring 2026 was an exception, so leave it out of your comparisons. Watch the engagement rate too: 1.6% to 2.9% for the middle half of regular posters.

05 **Say the point in the post, not only behind a link.**

Link-only posts got 26% to 40% fewer impressions. Write the point in the post, then add the link.

06 **Post what only your firm can say.**

Your own figures, client cases and experience are what AI tools can't write themselves. Answer one client question per post, and keep the page and partner profiles telling the same story.

WHAT LINKEDIN IS CHANGING

LinkedIn has over a dozen changes in mind for 2027, and some are already appearing. Pinned comments are back, so the link or next step can sit right under the post. Connected apps and a digital business card to share after events are starting to show up too. Others, such as showing a side role next to your main job, haven't reached Belgium or the Netherlands yet. LinkedIn is also testing a question in the feed that asks readers whether they liked a post, and why. If that spreads, genuinely useful posts stand to gain.

METHOD AND SOURCES

We looked at more than 500 accounts that publish through Willow. Most figures follow the 91 whose LinkedIn company pages posted at least five times in every quarter from Q1 2025 to Q3 2026, mostly in Belgium and the Netherlands: 29,520 posts, 1 January 2025 to 16 November 2026. No company is named. Figures are medians across firms; engagement is likes, comments and shares. Figures 2 and 3 and the Willow Create comparison use all accounts, comparing each firm with itself and adjusting for LinkedIn-wide swings; firms that chose Create may differ in other ways, and the mix comparison groups Create users by Create's share of their posts. Causes are our interpretation unless LinkedIn has stated them. Facebook and Instagram are left out because their reporting changed. Q4 2026 is partial. Full method on request.

Sources: LinkedIn, "How LinkedIn is improving the feed", 12 March 2026, news.linkedin.com/2026/ImprovingTheFeed. Semrush, LinkedIn AI visibility study, March 2026. Page 07 also uses OtterlyAI's LinkedIn citation research (2026) and Ahrefs' AI Search Benchmark Report (2026).