PRODUCT MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY

Improving the opportunity hunting experience of users

LinkedIn is the world's leading professional network empowering individuals to discover opportunities, build strategic connections, and accelerate their career journeys.

GOAL

Increase the adoption, engagement, and success rate of LinkedIn as the go-to job and opportunity-hunting platform for both job seekers and recruiters.

It enables job seekers to seamlessly explore, apply, and connect with recruiters, mentors, and industry peers — all in one trusted platform.

TARGET CUSTOMER SEGMENTS

Four segments across both sides of the market



Active Job Seekers

Fresh graduates, entry-level professionals, recently laid-off

Individuals actively searching for full-time roles across industries

High urgency, frequent platform use, resume-focused



Passive Job Seekers

Mid-career professionals, high performers in current jobs

Employed individuals open to new or better roles but not actively searching

High quality, low urgency, selective responders



Recruiters & Hiring Managers

Agency recruiters, in-house TA, team leads

Professionals responsible for sourcing and evaluating candidates

Time-pressed, outcome-driven, metrics-focused



Students Seeking Internships

Undergraduate and postgraduate students

Students seeking industry exposure via internships

Learning-focused, unaware of recruiter preferences, low guidance

TARGET CUSTOMER SEGMENTS

Needs and strategic alignment

SEGMENT	NEEDS	EXAMPLES	WHY THEY ALIGN
Active Job Seekers	Relevant job openings, resume visibility, recruiter outreach	MBA grads, software engineers from Tier 2 colleges, laid-off startup employees	Primary demand-side users; core to job-hunting engagement metrics
Passive Job Seekers	Discreet nudges, curated opportunities, role comparison tools	Senior Product Manager exploring leadership roles, software engineers open to FAANG	High-value talent pool for recruiters; growth lever through nudges and personalization
Recruiters & Hiring Managers	Candidate discovery, filtering tools, communication workflows	HRBP hiring for 10+ roles, startup founders hiring interns	Supply-side growth and engagement driver; matchmaker in network
Students Seeking Internships	Internship listings, project portfolio visibility, campus hiring channels	B.Tech 3rd year student, BBA student seeking summer internship	Pipeline for future full-time users; early engagement opportunity

01

Roles in the network

Each segment's participation type, network effect, and role in the platform flywheel.



Active Job Seekers

Demand-side participant, high frequency

Critical to achieving liquidity; early activation is essential.

EFFECT

Strong positive demand-side network effect: more active seekers → more profile views → more engagement on jobs and content → more job posts from recruiters.

ROLE IN PLATFORM FLYWHEEL

- Amplifies the "search → apply → connect" loop.
- High density improves match quality.



Passive Job Seekers

Latent demand-side participant

Activation is indirect, but essential for long-term scale and relevance.

EFFECT

Strengthens platform retention and depth over time.

ROLE IN FLYWHEEL

- Contribute to a thicker job seeker pool, improving the recruiter experience.
- More passive seekers means greater probability of match, which encourages recruiter activity.



Recruiters & Hiring Managers

Supply-side participant

Keeping them successful and active directly powers the whole ecosystem.

EFFECT

Direct cross-side network effect: more recruiters → more job listings → more seekers onboard → more engagement.

ROLE IN FLYWHEEL

- Keystone players: their presence brings purpose to seekers' activity.
- Feedback loops via InMails, job views, and engagement data.



Students Seeking Internships

Early-stage demand-side user

Investing in them ensures future liquidity and stickiness as they graduate into the job market.

EFFECT

Weak current cross-side effect; strong future network potential.

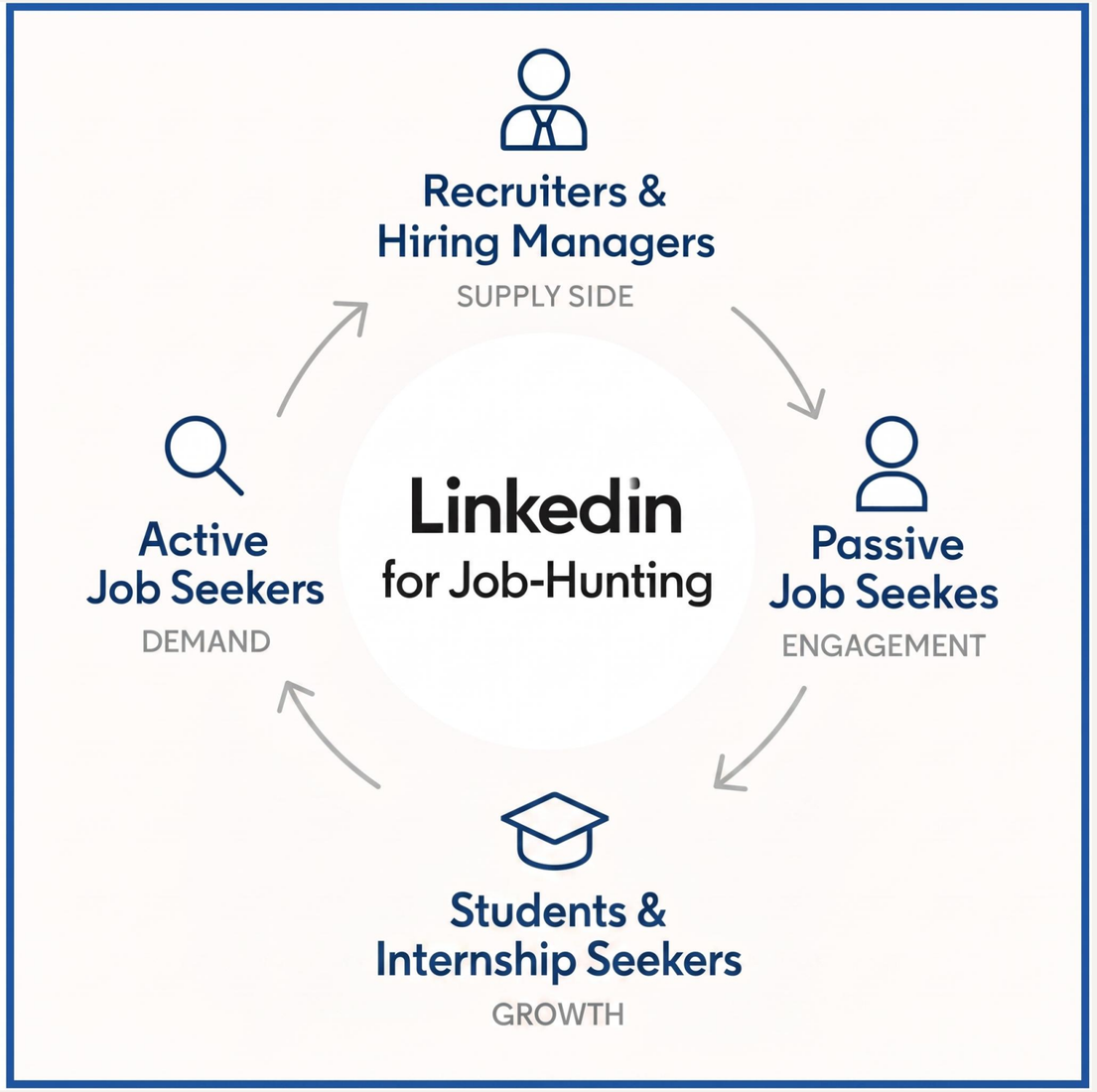
ROLE IN FLYWHEEL

- High virality and peer-sharing through the college network effect.
- Can engage in creator-like roles: blogs, learning, courses.

ROLES IN THE NETWORK

The job-hunting flywheel

Recruiters supply the opportunity, active seekers create the velocity, passive seekers add depth, and students renew the pool.



ROLES IN THE NETWORK

Roles at a glance

SEGMENT	ROLE IN NETWORK	PRIMARY EFFECT TYPE	STRATEGIC VALUE
Active Job Seekers	Core demand-side	Positive demand-side effect	Immediate liquidity & adoption
Passive Job Seekers	Latent demand-side	Cross-side reinforcement	Strengthens recruiter-side success
Recruiters / Hiring Managers	Supply-side catalyst	Cross-side network effect	Central to platform flywheel
Students (Internships)	Future demand-side	Long-tail, early-stage effects	Builds next-gen power users

ROLES IN THE NETWORK

Network strategy insights

1 Cross-side effects (recruiters → seekers) are the primary engine of job platform growth.

2 Same-side effects (seekers → seekers) are weaker but enabled through peer visibility: views, comments, referrals.

3 Career services, learning, and community help drive multi-modal network effects beyond jobs.

PRIORITIZED CUSTOMER SEGMENT

Active Job Seekers

REASONS FOR SELECTING THIS SEGMENT

Active Job Seekers are the segment with "high urgency, frequent platform use" — they generate the volume and velocity of activity (searches, applies, profile views) needed right now to make the platform feel alive.

They "amplify the 'search → apply → connect' loop" — this is LinkedIn's central job-hunting mechanic, not an adjacent behavior. Critical to achieving liquidity; early activation is essential.

SEGMENT	PRIORITY
Active Job Seekers	HIGHEST
Passive Job Seekers	HIGH
Recruiters / Hiring Managers	MODERATE
Students (Internships)	LOW

02

Customer pain points

Four friction points along the active job seeker's path, with root causes and strategic implications.

CUSTOMER PAIN POINTS — ACTIVE JOB SEEKERS

Getting set up, and getting connected

Initial profile set-up & discovery friction

Users feel lost or overwhelmed while trying to build their profile for job visibility.

ROOT CAUSES

Lack of onboarding guidance. No personalized goal-based nudges (e.g. "Want a job? Here's how to optimize your profile.")

IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT

Low early activity → drop in time-on-platform. High bounce rate post-sign-up.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION

Need for smart onboarding and contextual walkthroughs for job seekers.

Inability to connect with relevant professionals

Users struggle to expand their opportunity surface due to weak connections.

ROOT CAUSES

Poor visibility into whom to connect with. No guided outreach for early-stage seekers.

IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT

Reduced chance of discovery → frustration → drop-off.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION

Requires "connection pathways", a job-seeker friendly networking UI, or match suggestions.

CUSTOMER PAIN POINTS — ACTIVE JOB SEEKERS

Silence, and limited reach

Unresponsive DMs → decline in motivation & activity

Cold messages go unanswered → perceived rejection → user churn.

ROOT CAUSES

Unoptimized messaging. No social proof or warm intros. Recruiters rarely respond to low-signal profiles.

IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT

Major churn trigger for early users → reputation risk.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION

Needs peer-led communities, guided message templates, warm-intro loops.

Restricted to free plan → limited reach

New users don't invest in Premium, lowering exposure to recruiters.

ROOT CAUSES

Pricing friction. No perceived ROI. Premium value poorly communicated.

IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT

Slower activation. Less recruiter visibility → slower job placement.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION

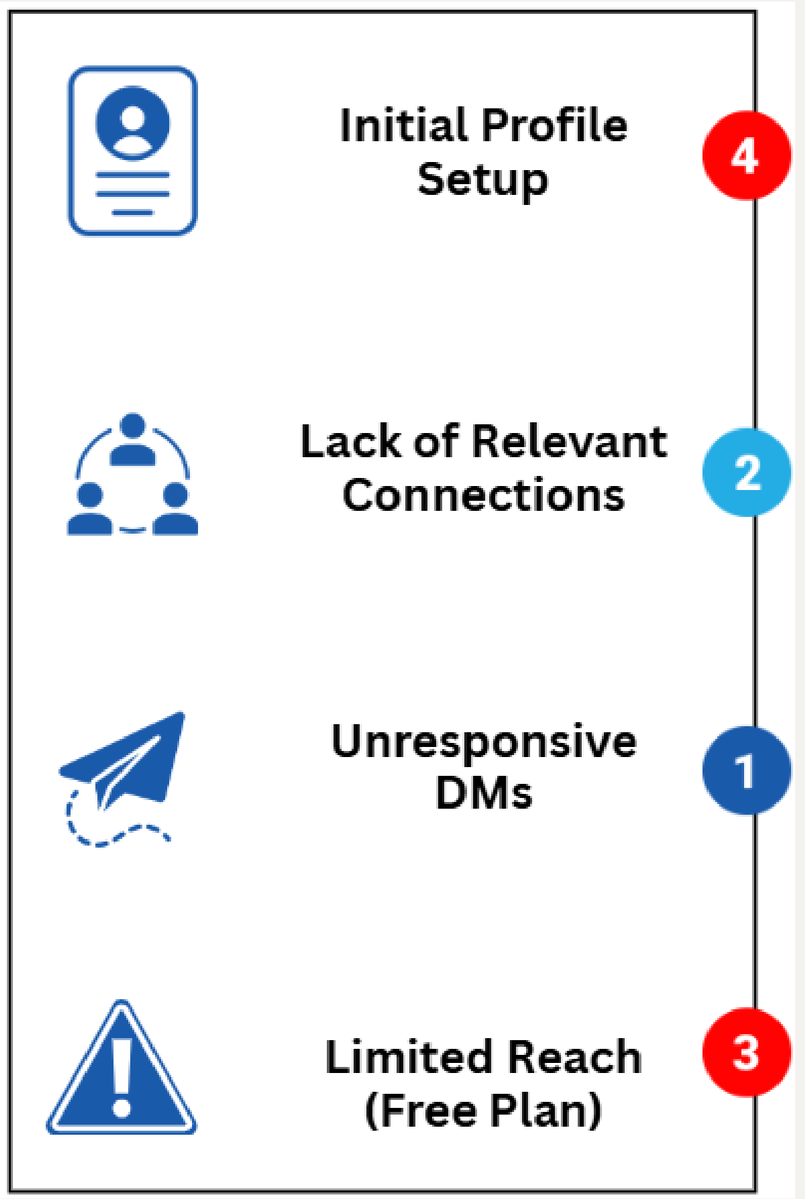
Introduce premium sampling, job-seeker scholarships, or credits-based unlocking.

CUSTOMER PAIN POINTS

Prioritization among the pain points

Unresponsive DMs rank first: they hit the highest-urgency segment at the moment of highest intent, and they are the clearest churn trigger of the four.

1. Unresponsive DMs
2. Lack of relevant connections
3. Limited reach (free plan)
4. Initial profile setup

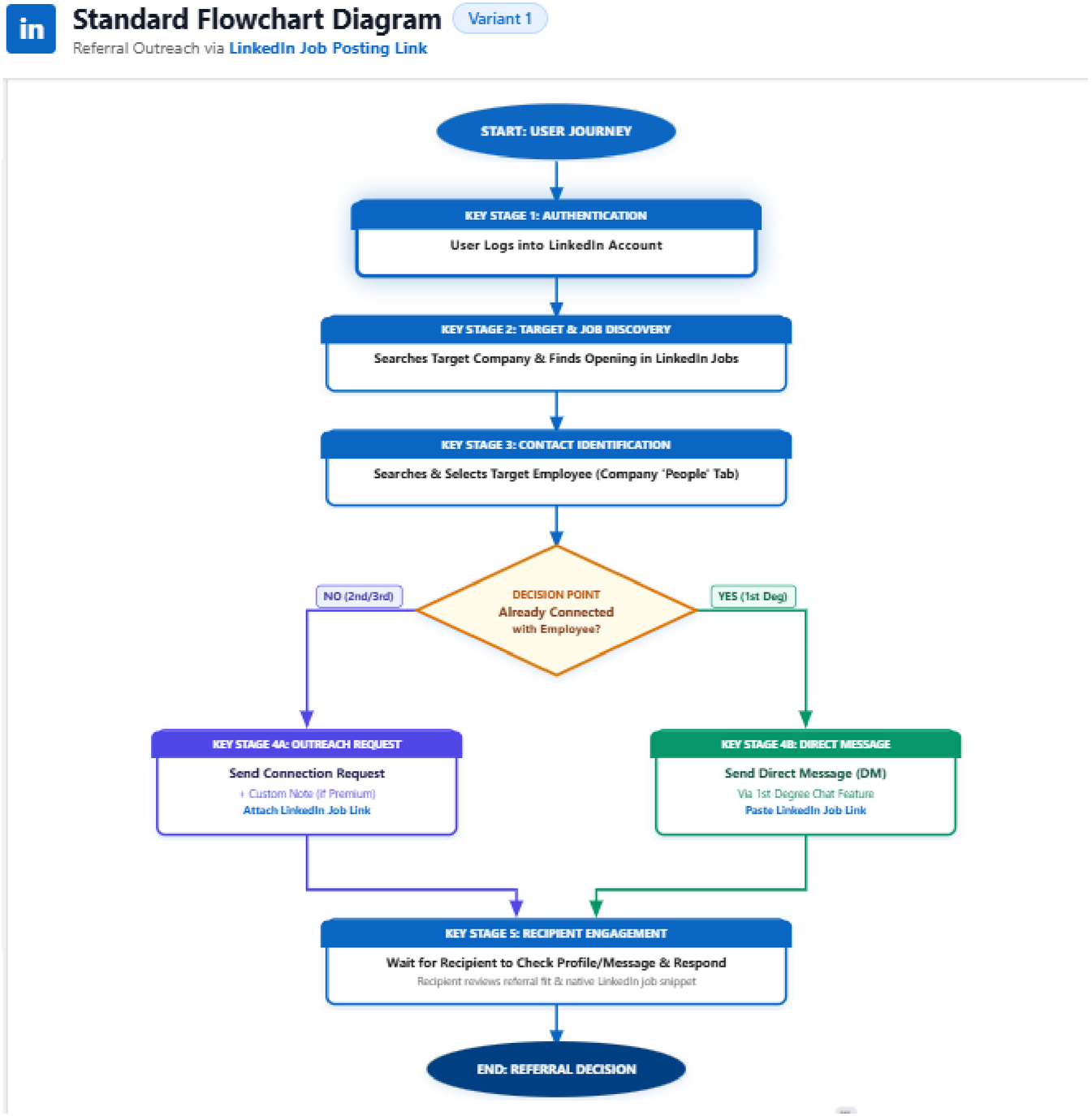


CUSTOMER PAIN POINTS

Existing user journey

Mapped from job search through referral request to the final decision, including the drop-off branches where seekers lose momentum.

Access the entire user journey



03

Proposed solutions

Eight recommendations for unresponsive DMs; three selected for the first launch-ready version.

MVP SELECTION (V1 SCOPE)

Selection rationale

Out of the 8 proposed solutions for the top-priority pain point (unresponsive DMs), 3 have been selected to build the first launch-ready version. The remaining 5 are scoped for future rollouts.

Rather than picking the 3 individually strongest recommendations, the selection follows the smallest complete closed loop that still resolves both root causes identified: low DM-check frequency, and abandoned referral commitments.

Each selected recommendation owns a distinct stage of the referral journey — origination, delivery, and closure — so removing any one of the three breaks the loop rather than merely weakening it.

8 Recommendations Proposed

3 in the V1 scope (create → deliver → close)

5 deferred to future rollouts

MVP SELECTION (V1 SCOPE)

One loop, three stages

CREATE

Rec. 8 — "Referral Request" as a native profile action

Structures the ask at the point of profile-view intent: 250-character message, optional CV, optional links.

Without this, seekers still cold-DM from a blank page and no well-formed request ever gets generated.

DELIVER

Rec. 6 — Persistent referral request feed banner

Surfaces the request on the one surface with the highest confirmed daily engagement: the feed. Fewer than 1 in 4 LinkedIn users check DMs daily.

Without this, the request sits invisible in an inbox nobody opens.

CLOSE

Rec. 2 — Referral follow-through automation

Converts an accepted "yes" into a system-owned, deadline-driven checklist instead of an open-ended chat, addressing referrers forgetting to complete the ask.

Without this, agreed referrals die from abandonment.

DEFERRED TO FUTURE ROLLOUTS

Alternate channels and quality multipliers

Rec. 1 — One-tap referral cards

Referral asks delivered as structured cards with Yes / No / Redirect buttons visible directly in push notifications and email previews — answerable without opening the app.

WHY DEFERRED

A second delivery channel; the feed banner (Rec. 6) already tests the delivery hypothesis, so adding both in v1 is redundant risk before response-rate data exists.

Rec. 3 — Social proof visible at a glance

Verified skill badges, manager endorsement nudges, and lightweight responsiveness context shown in the request preview so credibility is assessed before opening.

WHY DEFERRED

A quality multiplier that improves conversion within the loop — has no effect until the create → deliver → close loop is live.

Rec. 4 — Recruiter and employee-side response nudges

Reminders for unanswered high-fit requests, a one-tap decline-with-reason option, and an internal responsiveness metric to flag low-response accounts.

WHY DEFERRED

Also a quality multiplier; improves response rates on top of an already-functioning loop rather than enabling the loop itself.

DEFERRED TO FUTURE ROLLOUTS

Additional visibility surfaces

Rec. 5 — Feed-based visibility (ambient signal)

An "open to referral" signal seekers can post to their feed, surfaced to 2nd-degree connections at target companies as a passive, ambient card rather than a direct message.

WHY DEFERRED

Solves the same visibility problem as Rec. 6 through a different mechanism — candidate for v2 A/B testing once baseline feed-banner performance is known.

Rec. 7 — Persistent "Referral Requests" corner widget

A fixed, always-visible widget present across every page of the platform, expanding to a lightweight panel of pending requests without full navigation.

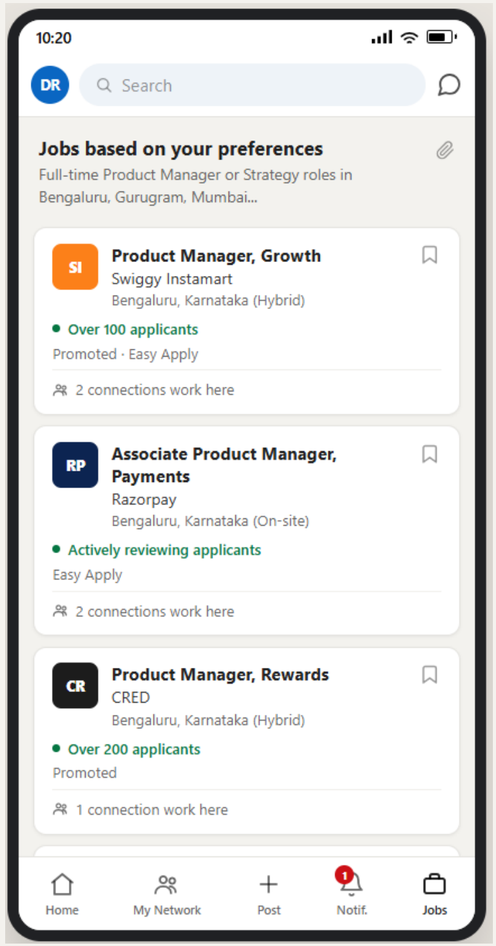
WHY DEFERRED

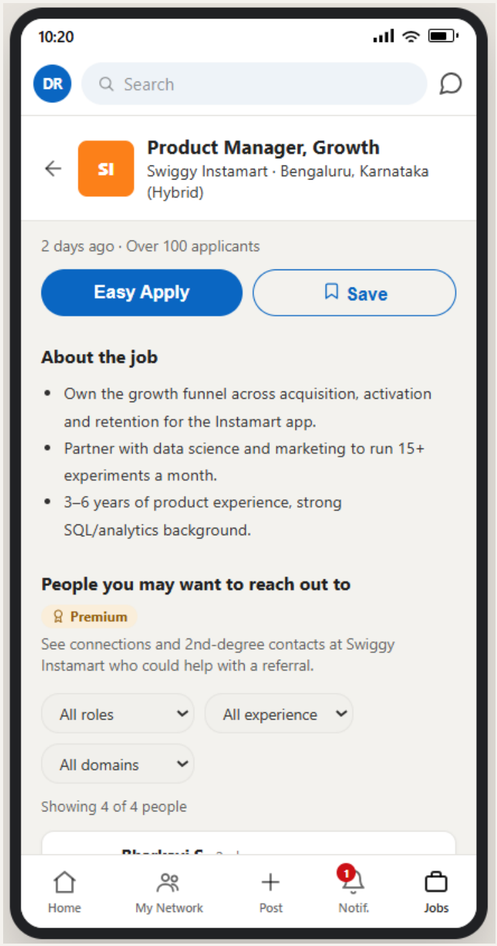
A second delivery surface layered on top of Rec. 6; deferred for the same reason as Rec. 1 — avoid multiple simultaneous delivery channels before v1 data exists.

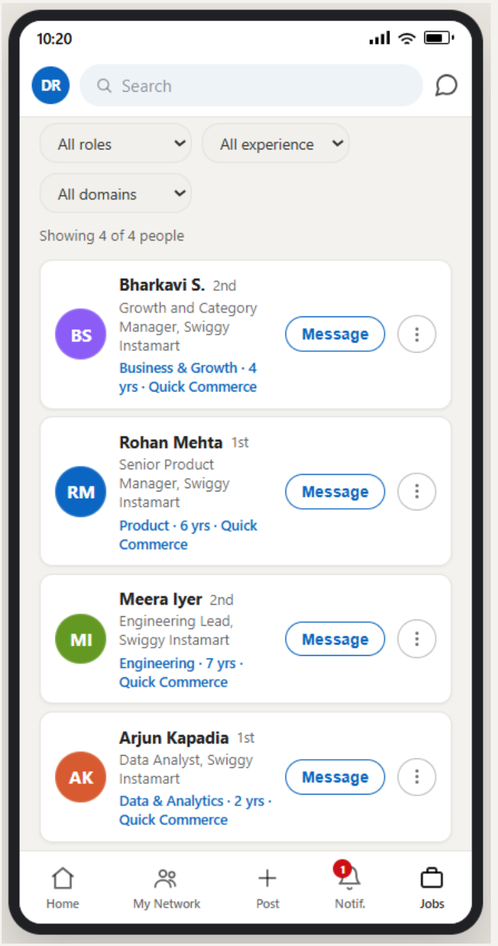
NOTE A monthly credit-style cap on referral requests (InMail-style) should be decided before v1 launch rather than retrofitted later, since introducing a cap after users are accustomed to unlimited requests is a much harder product change.

MOCKUPS — USER JOURNEY 1

Searching opportunities and relevant target profiles



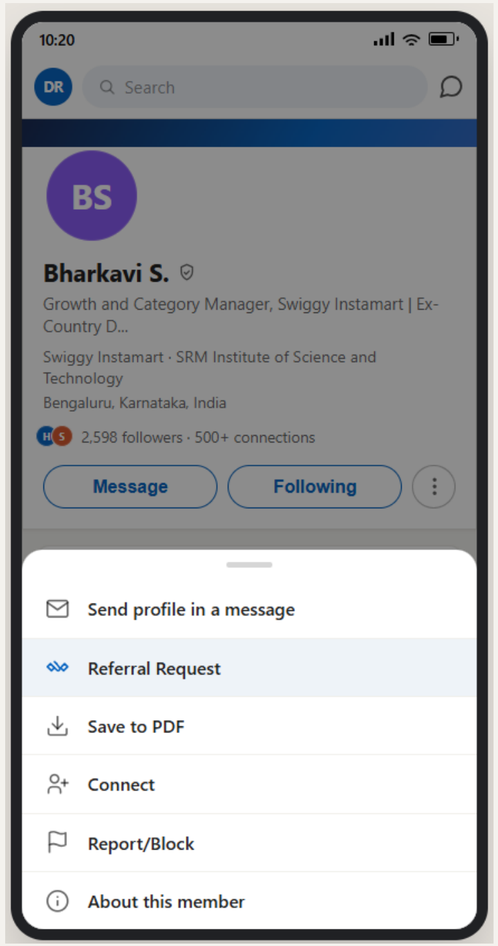


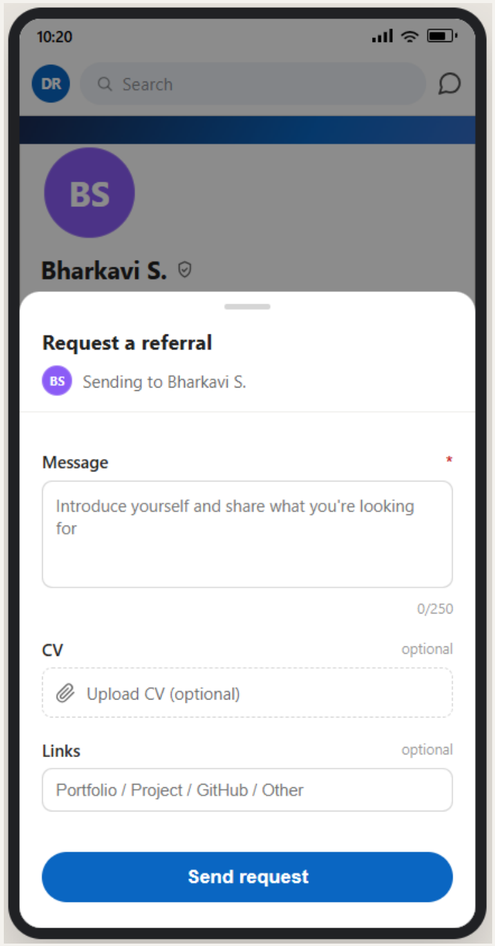


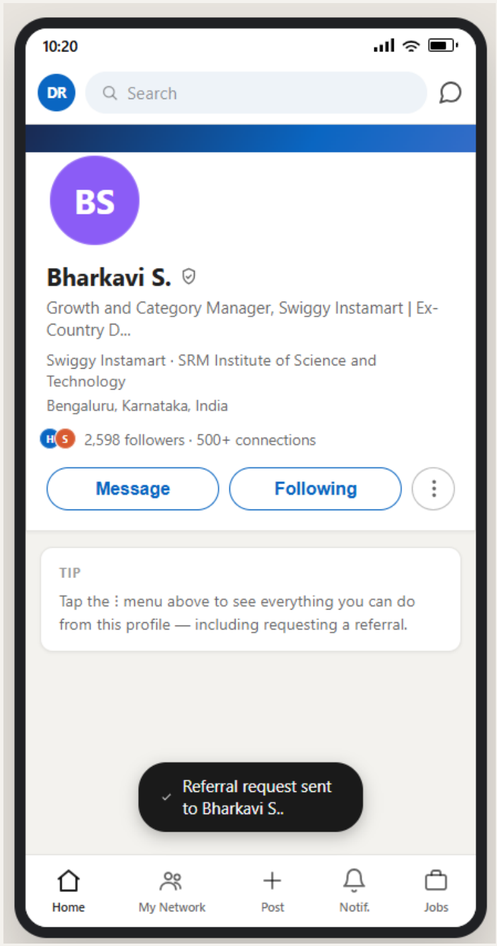
Tap Jobs (bottom nav) >> "Jobs based on your preferences" list loads >> Scroll past Premium divider >> "Jobs where you'd be a top applicant" list >> Tap a job card >> Job detail screen (description, Easy Apply, Save)

MOCKUPS — USER JOURNEY 2

Referral request initiation



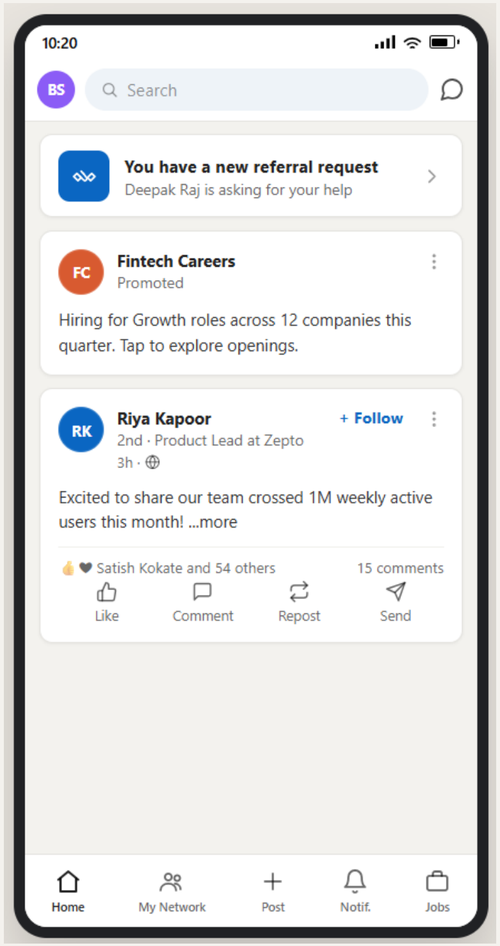


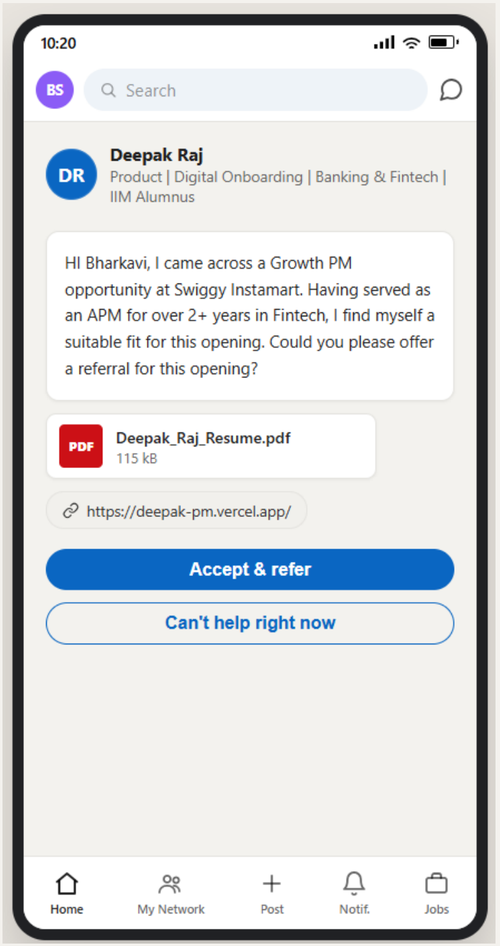


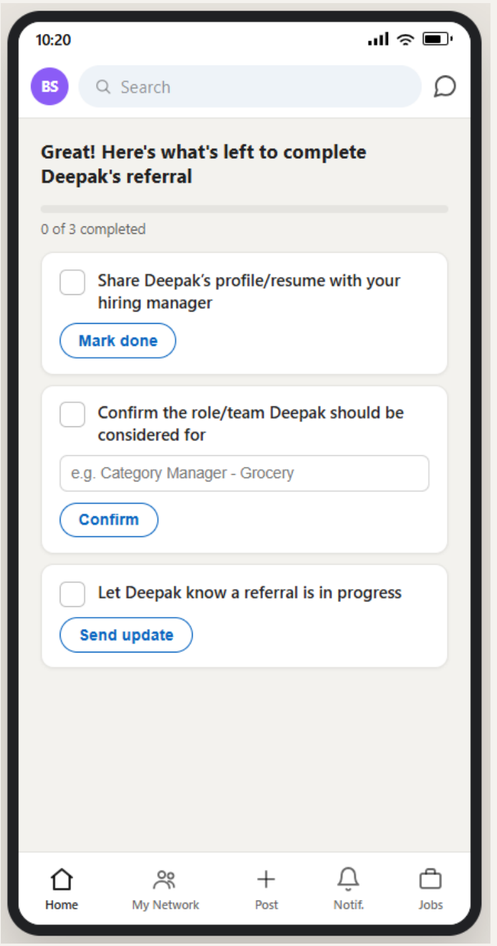
Bharkavi's profile >> Tap ⋯ menu >> Select "Referral Request" >> Fill message (250 char) + optional CV + optional links >> Tap "Send request" >> Confirmation toast

MOCKUPS — USER JOURNEY 3

Responding to received referral requests







Bharkavi opens app >> Feed loads with banner pinned above posts >> Tap "You have a new referral request" banner >> Request detail screen (message, CV, links) >> Accept & refer / Can't help right now

MEASUREMENT

Key metrics to be monitored

LEADING INDICATORS

Request form Fill Rate (%) : % of profile/job visits where a Referral Request form is started and successfully submitted

Referral Success Rate (%) : % of accepted referrals with at least 1 checklist item completed within 24 hours

LAGGING INDICATORS

Referral request response rate vs. **pre-launch cold-DM response rate** (uplift %)

Referral requests as % of total profile/DM activity

Session frequency uplift for users who've used the feature **vs. non-users**

Premium/InMail credit conversion uplift attributable to referral flow

EXPECTED BUSINESS IMPACT

Impact across the marketplace

For job seekers

DEMAND SIDE

Higher perceived platform utility → reduced churn among the highest-urgency, highest-frequency segment.

Fewer "silent rejections" → improved trust and continued engagement rather than a failed cold-DM attempt.

For recruiters & employees

SUPPLY SIDE

Structured, complete requests reduce the effort cost of helping → more referrals actually completed, not just started.

For LinkedIn

PLATFORM

Strengthens the core "search → apply → connect" loop — the primary flywheel mechanic tying seeker activity to recruiter value.

Higher successful-referral completion rate is a defensible differentiator vs. competitors.

FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS & ROADMAP

After v1

One-tap referral cards	Delivery via push notification and email with Yes / No / Redirect buttons, answerable without opening the app.
Social proof visible at a glance	Verified skill badges, manager endorsements, and responsiveness context shown in the request preview.
Response nudges	Reminders for unanswered requests, a one-tap decline-with-reason option, and internal responsiveness tracking.
Feed-based visibility	A passive "open to referral" signal seekers can post to their feed, surfaced to 2nd-degree connections at target companies.
Persistent corner widget	A fixed, always-visible widget present across every page, expanding to a panel of pending requests.