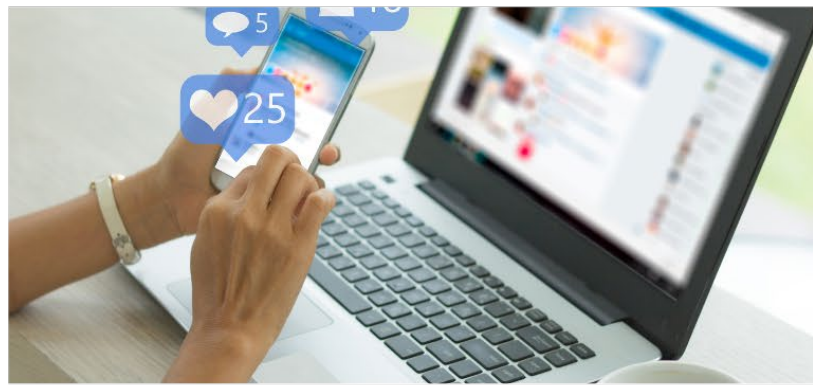

New Economy Social Media Recommendation Brief



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Executive Summary

The Virginia SBDC is an organization of 27 local Small Business Development Center offices across Virginia providing professional business advising, training, and business resources to help grow and strengthen Virginia businesses (Virginia SBDC, 2020). SBDC - Lynchburg Region is one of the 27 offices. Their objective is to help develop small businesses throughout the Lynchburg Region, which serves Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford & Campbell Counties, and the City of Lynchburg (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

SBDC - Lynchburg Region is growing its team to provide more advisors and educational opportunities to business owners in the Lynchburg Region looking to grow and develop their businesses.

The organization is also developing its brand awareness to reach more businesses. This is being done through social media marketing, speaking at events, and printed pamphlets. The goal is to aid and guidance to all small businesses.

The goal of the *Social Media Brief* is to review the benefits of adding LinkedIn into the social media strategy. This document will include information about LinkedIn and a strategy to help increase lead conversions.



**MOST EFFECTIVE PROVIDER OF
CONSULTING, EDUCATION, AND
RESOURCES TO VIRGINIA'S
BUSINESS COMMUNITY**

Introduction

Company History, Purpose, Mission, Vision

Company History

The Virginia SBDC is an organization of 27 local Small Business Development Center offices across Virginia providing professional business counseling, training, and business resources to help grow and strengthen Virginia businesses.

Thousands of business owners and managers received one-on-one counseling every year, and twice as many business owners attended a training program offered by a local SBDC. SBDC professionals assist with business planning, marketing, financial analysis, access to capital, business start-up, and other specialized services as requested. And companies report successes and impacts as a result of their SBDC relationship.

Purpose/Mission

The Virginia SBDC Network is the most extensive business development program in the Commonwealth. The Network is a partnership between the U.S. Small Business Administration, George Mason University, and premier local host organizations throughout Virginia. These vital partners include universities, community colleges, chambers of commerce, municipalities, economic development organizations, and private companies.

The Small Business Development Center – Lynchburg Region’s mission is to promote small business growth, entrepreneurship, and the strengthening economy by providing advising and training to our region’s small businesses (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

The SBDC -Lynchburg Region is a free, confidential advising and training service. It is open to any small business in the region – no membership is required. All programs of the Virginia SBDC are open to the public on a non-discriminatory basis (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

Vision

To be the most effective provider of consulting, education, and resources to Virginia's business community (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

Brief Product/Service Description Service Goals & Strategic Objectives

The Lynchburg Region SBDC Program is designed to deliver up-to-date advising, training, and technical assistance in all aspects of small business management (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

Topics Include:

Financial Review

Marketing

Organizational Management

Startup Assistance

Customer Development

Government Contracting

Access To Capital & Investment

Training ranges from our Start Smart program which answers the most basic questions for those new to the business to specialized training in industries like healthcare and early childhood education (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

Programs & Resources

Start Smart

Do you want to open your own business? Do you have an idea for a product or service that you want to bring to market? Maybe you have people ready to buy your products, or customers ready to sign up for your services, but you're not sure how to start getting paid. You may have an idea of what your concept is but you're not sure if it will make a profitable company. We'll cover the importance of creating a business plan, figuring out how to determine which licenses and permits you really need, and what other resources are available to launch your new venture. Register for one of these dates – new dates and locations are added frequently (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).



Business Game Plan

Business Game Plan is a multi-week seminar designed to help owners and leaders of businesses plan to grow and scale their business. Facilitators will coach participants to help businesses make positive adjustments as we move past a Covid-19 pandemic economy. Participants will meet with professionals in various fields such as Legal, HR, Banking, Marketing, and Finance, and create relationships with other business owners or leaders and mentors from the SBDC Lynchburg Region. Businesses will come away with a strategic plan for their business.

Craft Beverage Assistance Program

CBA services are designed to promote sustainable growth and resilience among Virginia-based producers, from start-ups to established and expanding companies (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

Services:

Market Analysis

Sales Strategy

Back-of-House Operations

Distribution & Logistics

Marketing & Promotion

Expansion & Exports

Early Education Business Program

In partnership with [Early Education Business Consultants](#), the Virginia SBDC is offering an 8-week, training program that will provide childcare businesses with the necessary management and business tools to improve the profitability and sustainability of their childcare business and the long-term relationships needed to support them as business owners. Childcare businesses will be given the tools to expand their business while learning the fundamentals of small business management (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).



Services:

Strategic Planning

Using Technology

Financial Management

HR Management

Marketing

Networking

Small Town & Merchant Program (STAMP)

STAMP is a comprehensive collection of webinars, workshops, virtual one-on-one sessions, hands-on initiatives, and resources designed to address the specific needs of main street retail and restaurant businesses (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

Local organizations such as the Virginia Main Street program, chambers of commerce, retail and restaurant associations, and others work with STAMP to sponsor and deliver targeted and relevant guidance that business owners and

managers can put to use immediately (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

STAMP offers:

**Individual one-on-one
consulting sessions**

Complete confidentiality

On-site and virtual business visits

Webinars and seminars

Individual, retail business and restaurant check-ups in person and online



Cybersecurity

Whether you are a retailer or restaurant who is responsible for customer data or a business moving online for the first time the SBDC provides support for small companies to keep your business secure by offering one-on-one counseling, assessments, and webinars to learn how to protect your businesses from cyber threats (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

Our team can work directly with very small business owners who do not have a managed IT service provider or who self-manage as well as provide professional suggestions and guidance to IT teams (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.).

Services

Counseling

**Build Your Cyber Risk
Program**

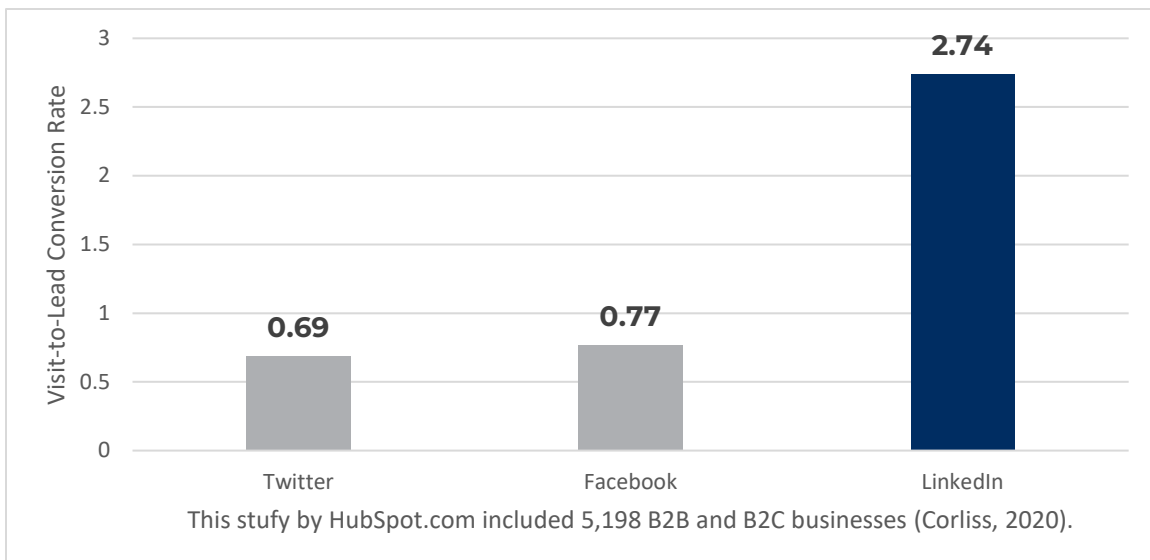
Recorded Webinars

Social Media Recommendation

The one best social media platform I am recommending for this organization is LinkedIn. Currently, SBDC Lynchburg Region has been focusing on the Facebook and Instagram social media platforms. By already having an established presence on those platforms I recommend LinkedIn.

LinkedIn has over 774 million users worldwide (Zantal-Wiener, 2021). This makes LinkedIn the largest professional network. Marketing on this platform will allow us to improve brand awareness, make connections, foster business relationships and partnerships, share content, drive traffic to our website and generate leads (Zantal-Wiener, 2021). By utilizing this platform, we will be able to reach more of our target audience.

The Social Media Brief will provide SBDC Lynchburg Region with information on strengthening their social media presents and marketing strategy. This brief will highlight the analytical tools and how to implement a strong marketing strategy that can effectively be managed by the marketing team. By following the guidance of this brief, we can take SBDC Lynchburg Region’s social media presence to the next level.



LinkedIn Analysis

As the world's largest platform for professionals, LinkedIn is an amazing resource that SBDC Lynchburg Region should look into taking advantage of. With the ability to reach more potential leads, it's time to consider adding LinkedIn to the social media marketing strategy. Below are more reasons why LinkedIn is going to help SBDC Lynchburg Region to assist more small businesses in the Lynchburg Region.

LinkedIn Page

An organization's hub, a LinkedIn page, allows us to establish our brand's identity, purpose, voice, capabilities, and culture (Vu, 2019). The page will be used to help people learn more about what resources and opportunities SBDC Lynchburg Region have to offer. LinkedIn provides an easy three-step "Complete Your Page" process to create a free page (Vu, 2019). Another great feature is that as admins of the page, we would be able to send out a set number of invites each month to our friends on LinkedIn and to follow the SBDC Lynchburg Region page.

Benefits of LinkedIn Ads

LinkedIn Ads allows us to create and customize each ad type to be tailored to help us achieve our different goals. The Ad options include: Sponsored Content, Sponsored Messaging, Lead Gen Forms, Text, and Dynamic Ads (LinkedIn, n.d.). Through these ad options, SBDC Lynchburg Region can tap into LinkedIn's professional audience.

Reaching a Professional Audience

Worldwide professionals gather, stay connected and informed, and advance their careers through LinkedIn (LinkedIn, n.d.). Because SBDC Lynchburg Region's target audience is small businesses and entrepreneurs, LinkedIn is the ideal platform to reach those potential clients and leads.

LinkedIn offers a powerful data on their audience demographics by:

- Using demographic marketing to target professional audiences
- Focus on behavior, intent, interests, engagement and more
- Reach the audience involved in buying decisions (LinkedIn, n.d.)

LinkedIn Customer Analysis

Demographics

SBDC Lynchburg Region's target audience demographics is the radius of the Lynchburg Region, which includes Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford & Campbell Counties, and the City of Lynchburg (America's SBDC Virginia Lynchburg Region, n.d.). Within that area, we are looking to reach small businesses, entrepreneurs, and individuals that fall between those two categories that are looking to learn more about businesses.



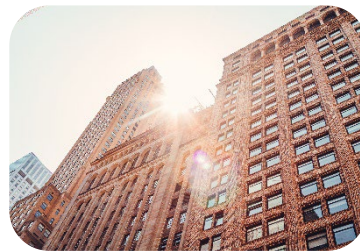
750+ million

LinkedIn members
worldwide



65+ million

business decision
makers are on LinkedIn



57+ million

companies have a page
on LinkedIn

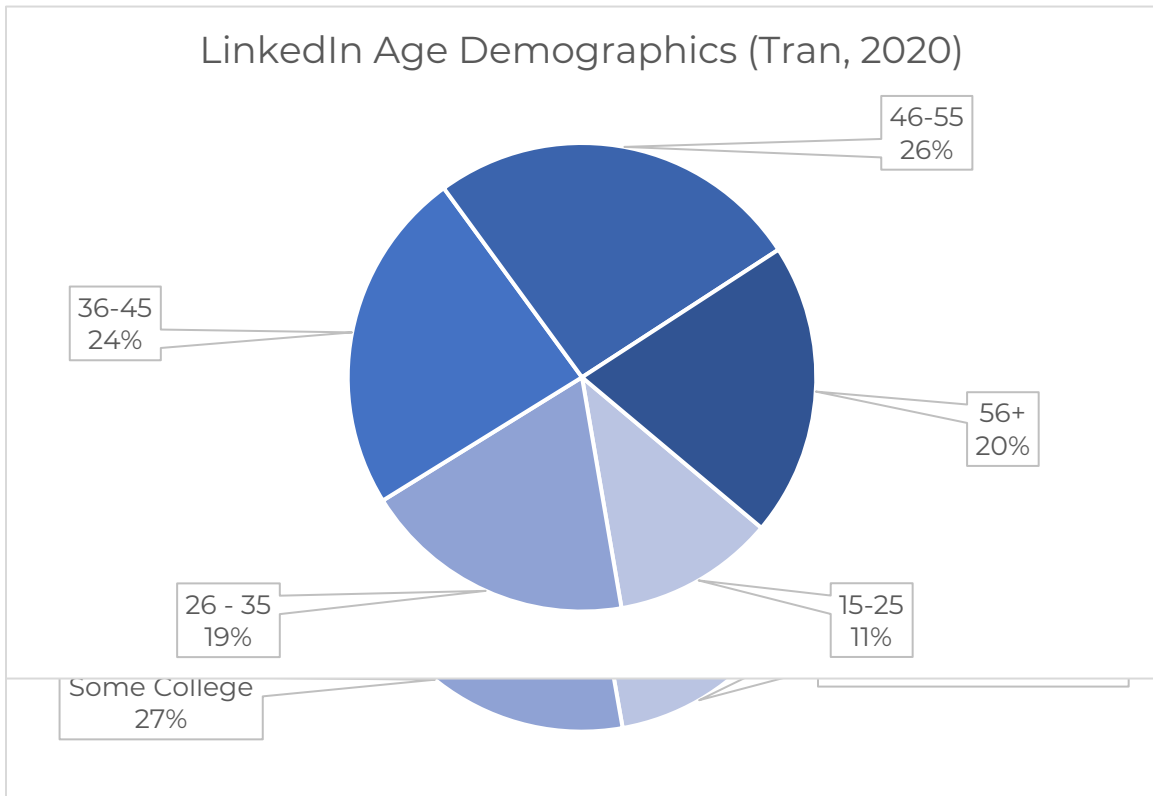


200 countries

and territories

This target audience can be reached through LinkedIn based on the general demographics, according to Hootsuite listed below:

- 12% of users in the US visit daily
- 9% of users in the US visit the site multiple times a day
- 30+ million companies use LinkedIn
- 154+ million American workers have profiles on LinkedIn
- 57% of users access the site on mobile devices (Tran, 2020).



Competitive Analysis

The competitive advantage that LinkedIn offers over other businesses for SBDC Lynchburg Region is targeting a very narrow case (Hobart, 2011). By having a more segmented market, LinkedIn will be able to provide more valuable leads for SBDC Lynchburg Region giving the company an advantage over other organizations in the business development industry.

SBDC Lynchburg Region represents a B2B (business to business) and B2C (business to consumer) market. Using social media, the SBDC Lynchburg Region is building the brand within the Lynchburg Region to reach more small businesses and

entrepreneurs. Currently, there has been some engagement on the Facebook and Instagram pages, but by expanding to LinkedIn we would be able to see more engagement by our target audience.

LinkedIn can reach a more professional audience. To gain an edge over other business consultants by creating a LinkedIn page, we will be able to:

- **Showcase Our Brand:** LinkedIn is a professional way for SBDC Lynchburg Region to show people who we are as a company, and it allows them to have an overview of our mission (Daly, 2016).
- **Search Engine Optimization:** By having a profile our rank will be higher optimized on search engines like Google (Daly, 2016).
- **Networking:** We will be able to meet potential leads to better understand what their needs are and guide them to proper resources (Daly, 2016).
- **Find New Employees:** As the SBDC Lynchburg Region grows, LinkedIn would be a great location to find more consultants in the area (Daly, 2016).
- **Stay Updated:** LinkedIn will help us stay up to date with what small businesses are doing in the area, as well as provide relevant information to our followers about upcoming events (Daly, 2016).

Risks

With setting up any social media page there are always risks that come along with it. These risks can pose anywhere from security threats to reputation damage. In 2020, between July and December, LinkedIn had blocked over 14 million fake accounts (Bridges, 2021). These profiles have been used to connect with people and organizations to collect information.

Legal risks that are associated with media are making sure to obtain licenses and clearance for all content that the company posts on its page (Pink, 2016). It is imperative that the proper steps are being taken to ensure that permission is given before posting anything that was not created by SBDC Lynchburg Region.

Lastly, the risk of reputation damage. Social media offers transparency of how businesses conduct their customer service. Comments and reviews are made public, which can easily affect the reputation of an organization.

Ways to mitigate these risks is to create a course of action to identify and handle threats that puts the company and its employees at risk (Bridges, 2021). One way to maintain a strong reputation is to have a system in place to quickly and

appropriately respond to comments and reviews that help resolve the situation for both the client and the company.

Social Media Implementation Strategy

Social Media Content Policy

To maintain our brand voice while mitigating social media risks, SBDC Lynchburg Region should have a social media policy. The social media policy is a document that provides guidelines and requirements for the SBDC Lynchburg Region's social media use (Newberry & Cooper, 2022). The policy should include the following:



(Newberry & Cooper, 2022)

Customer Privacy Strategy

Security will be of utmost importance for SBDC Lynchburg Region. We will be sure to have measures in place to secure personal information from clients. The privacy strategy will also need to cover photo/video release forms to ensure we have permission before using people's imagery.

Security Strategy & Procedures

The social media security strategy and procedures will be put in place to protect SBDC Lynchburg Region. The procedure will include:

- Emergency contact lists with the specific roles of the social media team to the executive director
- Guidelines to identify the scope of a crisis
- Internal communication plan

- Approval process for responses (Newberry & Cooper, 2022).

Social Media Team Strategies

The social media team strategy will break down how the media goals will be accomplished. This will include the roles and programs used to execute the media strategy.

Roles & Responsibilities

Media & Marketing Consultant: Write captions, design graphics, and schedule posts and ads.

Branding & Marketing Advisor: Provide insight into ad campaigns, and proof posts and ads.

Executive Director: Oversee campaigns and budget and approve posts and ads.

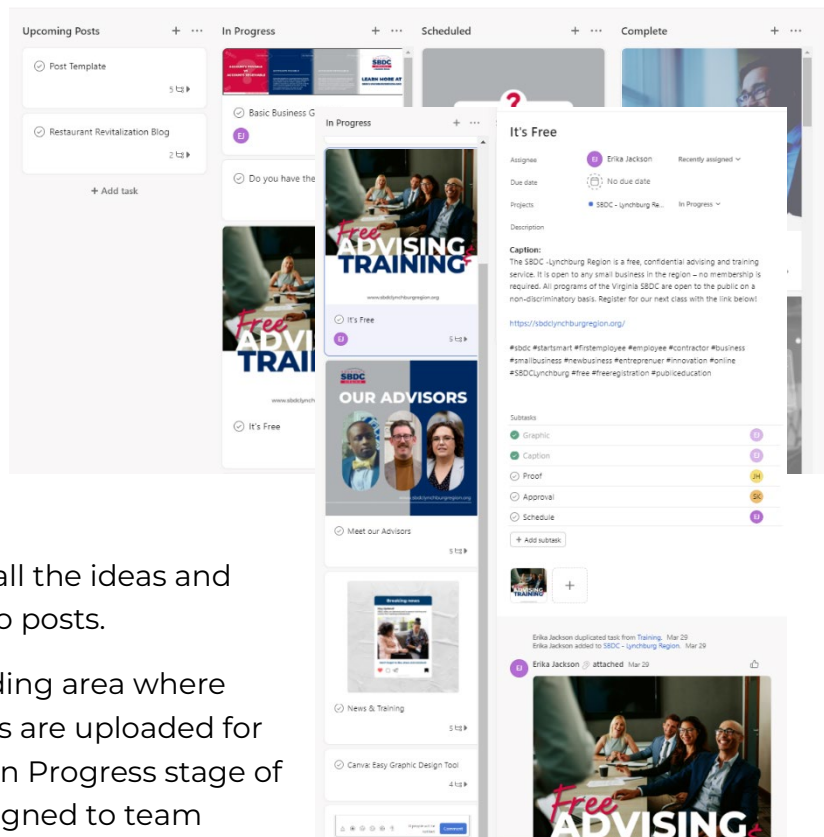
Social Media Content

Procedures

Asana is a free organizational and task management tool that we use to manage the content that is produced and published on our social media platforms. Within Asana, I have created a workflow process to ensure that posts move from the creative phase to the completed phase of the process.

Upcoming Posts section includes all the ideas and concepts that are to be created into posts.

In the Progress section is the pending area where graphics, descriptions, and captions are uploaded for proofing and approval. Within the In Progress stage of the posting, there are subtasks assigned to team members to ensure there are no errors before scheduling the post. The graphic and caption are first created before being proofed and approved.



The scheduled section allows the team to see what items have been scheduled to post.

Complete section lists all the posts that have been successfully posted to the platforms.

This process will be the same for running ads, with information in the description about the duration of the ads and budgets

Measuring the Outcomes

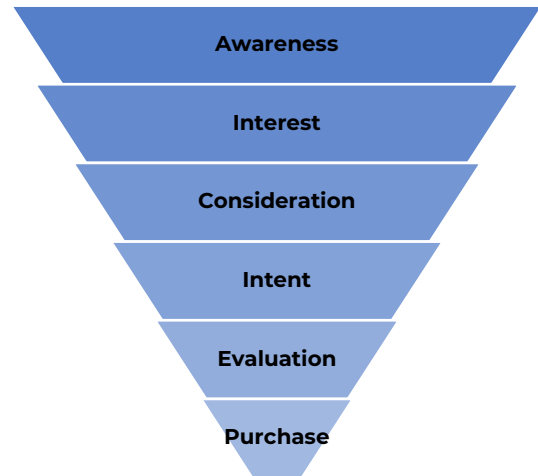
To measure the success of the LinkedIn social media strategy we will review the reports and analytics provided by LinkedIn. A monthly presentation will be created to help the team understand trends and the activity of our followers and potential leads. With real-time data on the campaigns, we will be able to learn what our audience engages with and how to convert leads into customers.

LinkedIn allows us to measure conversion, analyze performance, understand our audience, and keep a pulse on the biggest opportunities (LinkedIn, n.d.).

- **Measure Conversions:** Conversion tracking helps understand how ads are driving business results, generating leads and event registrations.
- **Analyze Performance:** To learn which campaigns and ad creatives are most effective compare metrics, link clicks, impressions, and social actions.
- **Understand Your Audience:** Learn about the audience with campaign demographics to see who engages with the ads. Discover content preferences and professional traits like job titles, company names, and industries.
- **Keep a Pulse on Your Biggest Opportunities:** The engagement report measures engagement with the brand across LinkedIn and the website.

By using the data provided by the LinkedIn reports we will be able to see more potential leads move through the marketing funnel, with the intent of having more clients use our resources. We will be able to measure the effectiveness of each campaign that is tailored to nurture potential leads from the awareness stage to the purchase stage. The purchase stage refers to clients that use our free services.

Through these processes, we should be able to reach and assist more small businesses in the Lynchburg Region.



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Appendices

“Lynchburg Region” is used throughout the document to represent the inclusion of the areas served by SBDC Lynchburg Region. The region includes Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford & Campbell Counties, and the City of Lynchburg.

Currently, SBDC Lynchburg Region already has a Facebook and Instagram page. For this project, I focused more on LinkedIn, a platform that we currently do not utilize.