

CASUAL · CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE · OCTOBER 2026

The case for human storytelling.

What LinkedIn's research, the B2B effectiveness studies and our audit of more than 1,600 company YouTube channels say about films built around people.

7 in 100

B2B video ads on LinkedIn show any human emotion, by LinkedIn's own count of more than 13,000.

Source: LinkedIn Creative Labs, The Art and Science of Video Storytelling, 2025: a count of more than 13,000 B2B video ads on LinkedIn. The report's other figures measure engagement on LinkedIn. They do not measure sales.

Casual



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Human stories go with better results. Most B2B video doesn't tell them.

What LinkedIn's research, the B2B effectiveness studies and our audit of more than 1,600 company YouTube channels say about films built around people.

7 in 100

B2B video ads on LinkedIn show any human emotion, by LinkedIn's own count.

+78%

engagement on LinkedIn for brand awareness videos with authentic emotion.

76.7%

of 1,700 B2B ads scored one star out of five. One star predicts no market-share growth.

7x

as many very large business effects for emotional B2B campaigns as for rational ones.

19 of 22

award winners we studied had a protagonist. 7 of 28 films with no award found did.

+59%

applications per role after HSBC cast its own engineers as the heroes.

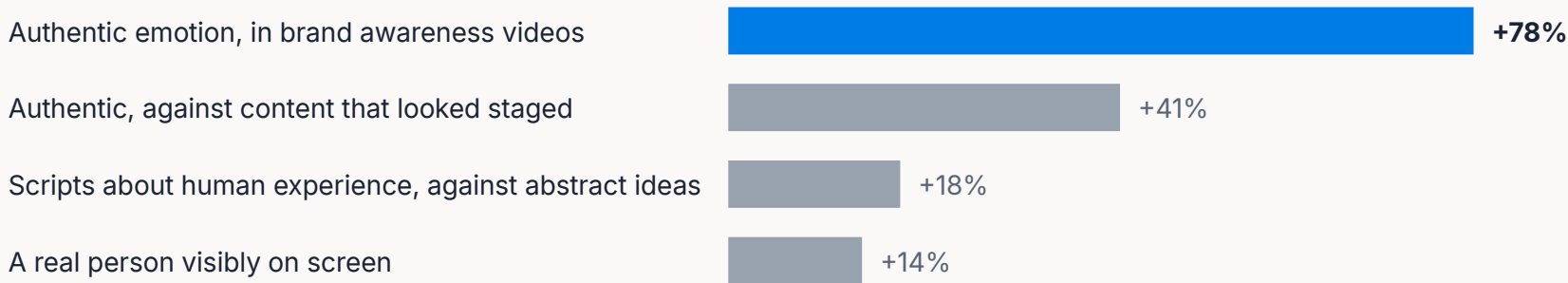
Every figure is sourced on its own page. LinkedIn's figures are its own counts, and measure engagement. The protagonist finding covers 50 films, some outside B2B, read by our AI film assessor. The 59% is the whole HSBC campaign's result.

Casual

WHAT LINKEDIN FOUND

B2B videos on LinkedIn drew more engagement when they showed real people and real feeling.

ENGAGEMENT ON LINKEDIN, BY LINKEDIN'S OWN COUNT



Real feeling goes with more engagement, yet 93 in 100 B2B video ads show none.

Source: LinkedIn Creative Labs, *The Art and Science of Video Storytelling*, 2025: engagement with B2B video ads on LinkedIn. LinkedIn's own figures; it names a comparison only for the +41% and +18% lines, and publishes no baselines. Engagement is not sales.

Casual

On YouTube, B2B viewers like what they watch as often as consumer viewers do.

LIKES AS A SHARE OF VIEWS, UPLOADS THAT DON'T LOOK PAID FOR



The clear difference is format. Shorts make up 38% of B2B uploads, against 56% for consumer brands.

Selling to businesses is no reason for a film to draw fewer likes.



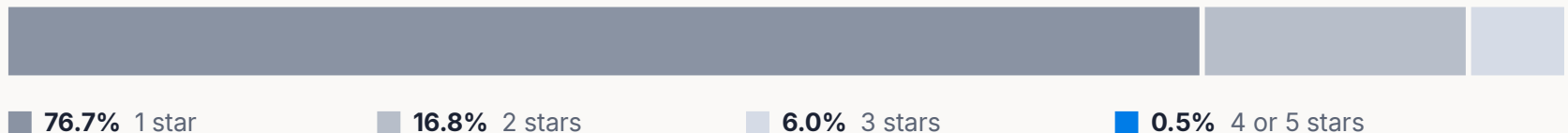
Source: Casual Films, Company YouTube Benchmark, deep read of 177 channels, 26 September 2026: 45 B2B and 89 consumer channels with 20+ uploads that don't look paid for (for likes), and 53 and 110 channels (for Shorts). Medians.

WHAT DULL COSTS

More than three in four B2B ads are so dull they predict no market-share growth.

76.7%

of 1,700 B2B ads scored one star out of five. One star predicts no market-share growth.



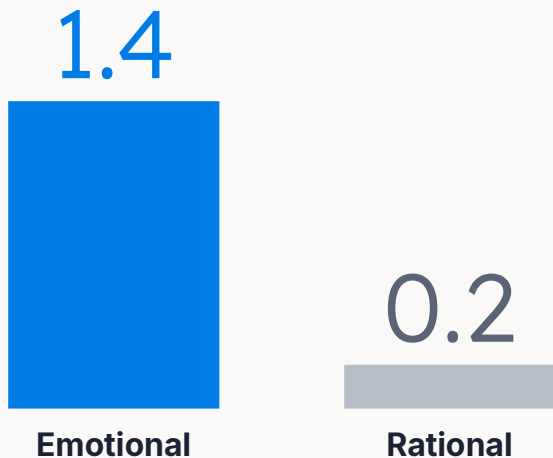
The researchers' advice: tell a story about a character in a relevant buying situation.

Source: The B2B Institute at LinkedIn and System1, *Cashing in on Creativity*, 2021: 1,700 B2B ads across six categories, rated for emotional response. Growth is predicted by System1's model, built on 40,000+ rated ads, at 10 points of extra share of voice.

Casual

WHAT PAYS

Emotional B2B campaigns reported seven times as many very large business effects.



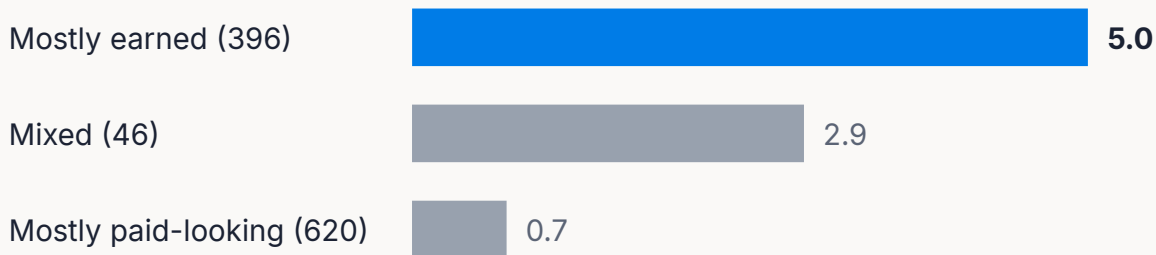
Per campaign, in the IPA's B2B cases: the number of business measures, such as sales, market share and profit, on which a campaign reported a very large gain.

Source: Binet and Field, 5 Principles of Growth in B2B Marketing, The B2B Institute at LinkedIn and the IPA, 2019. Fewer than 50 B2B cases from the IPA Databank.

Casual

Channels that earn their views have about seven times the subscribers per view.

SUBSCRIBERS PER 1,000 LIFETIME VIEWS, MEDIAN



72%

of the views on big companies' uploads look paid for.

Views people choose to watch go with far more followers than views that look paid for.

Source: Casual Films, Company YouTube Benchmark, September 2026: 1,062 company channels with 100,000+ lifetime views whose likes could be read; 70.7bn views on a year of uploads across 1,492 company channels. Links between measures, which show no cause.

OUR OWN RESEARCH

Nearly nine in ten award winners we studied had a protagonist. One in four of the rest did.

AWARD WINNERS



19 of 22

FILMS WITH NO AWARD FOUND



7 of 28

Low-budget winners had a protagonist nearly as often as expensive ones: 10 of 12 against 9 of 10 (eight of the 12 were charity films). A protagonist is a choice made in the treatment.



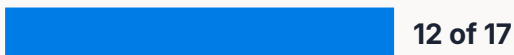
Source: Casual calibration research, August 2026: 50 films, 22 award winners and 28 with no award found, including 25 new films that tested the finding again, read by our AI film assessor. The films are not all B2B. Awards measure quality. They do not measure business results.

Casual

A face on camera is not enough. Series that teach beat their channel in 12 of 17 tests.

NAMED SERIES THAT BEAT THE REST OF THEIR OWN CHANNEL

How-to series



Interview shows



Event series

0 of 13

Employer-brand (two found)

0 of 2

AHREFS

29,000

people who signed up said they found Ahrefs through YouTube. Its channel teaches, with one long-standing host.

Give people a reason to watch: something to learn, or a story to follow.

Sources: Casual Films, Company YouTube Benchmark: deep read of 177 channels, and 46 fast-growing brand channels read in depth. Each series against the rest of its own channel, uploads that don't look paid for. Ahrefs' own sign-up survey, 2022.

Casual



WHAT MADE WELL MEANS

What the best human stories do.

01

One person

In our experience, one engineer doing one thing beats seven executives saying nothing.

02

Show the work

Film people doing the job, so the viewer sees it for themselves.

03

Everyday life

Everyday settings went with 32.8% more emotional response. 71% of B2B tech ads are set at work.

04

Something at stake

A real problem, and a reason to care what happens next.

05

Keep showing up

Post often. The busiest channels earn 3.6 times the views per subscriber of the quietest, though each upload draws fewer views.

Sources: Casual creative intelligence; The B2B Institute at LinkedIn and System1, Anatomy of a Great B2B Ad: Tech Edition, 2021 (587 US B2B tech ads, associations); Casual Films, Company YouTube Benchmark (360 channels).

Casual

FROM OUR OWN WORK

HSBC cast its own engineers as the heroes of an action thriller.

+59%

applications per role after the campaign launched.

One hero film and six character films

Shot in the UK, Hong Kong, China and India

Two Golds at the Lens Awards 2026

Source: HSBC and Casual Films campaign case study, 2025; Lens Awards 2026 winners. The 59% is the whole campaign's result: seven films, paid media and a landing page together.

Casual

Make more human stories. Make them really well.



If you want to see how your channel compares, let me know.

Nick Francis · Founder and CEO, Casual Films

nick@casualfilms.com

More of our research: casualfilms.com/research

Casual Films · Founded 2006 · 9,591 successful projects for 805 clients and counting...



Casual