

DEAL ORIGINATION / FIRST EDITION

The M&A Prospecting Playbook

Using LinkedIn Sales Navigator to find businesses, reach decision-makers and build a disciplined deal pipeline.

FOR BUYERS, ADVISERS & CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT TEAMS

GODFRED OFOSU ASANTE

Research carefully. Approach clearly. Follow through.

FREE SAMPLE | COMPLETE EDITION: 38 PAGES

Contents

Introduction A better beginning to the deal	4
01 Write the mandate before the search	5
02 Build a credible profile and a workable setup	7
03 Find the companies first	9
04 Identify the right people and use Boolean search	11
05 Qualify the list before anyone sends a message	13
06 Save searches, watch alerts and choose the moment	15
07 Start a conversation that makes sense	17
08 Handle replies without losing the relationship	19
09 Book the meeting and make the first call useful	21
10 Build a pipeline you can trust	23
11 Adapt the method for sellers and merger partners	25
12 Run the operation without losing control	27
13 Your first 30 days	29
Appendix A The working forms	31
Appendix B Search recipes and quality checks	34
Appendix C Terms used in this book	35
References Official resources and editorial basis	36
About the author Godfred Ofosu Asante	38

Introduction | A better beginning to the deal

A promising acquisition often begins quietly. An owner accepts an introduction. A conversation reveals a succession problem, a growth constraint or a wish to spend less time running the company. Nothing is signed. The business may never have been advertised for sale. But there is now a relationship worth developing.

Sales Navigator can help you find that starting point. It gives structure to company and people research, makes a large market easier to examine, and helps you keep track of organisations and individuals worth watching. The harder work remains yours: knowing what you want to buy, judging the evidence, approaching people with a credible reason and following through.

My work in lead generation, account management and operations has involved translating client requirements into research criteria, coordinating outreach and keeping campaign delivery organised. The recurring problems were rarely solved by sending more messages. They were solved by clarifying the target, checking the list, agreeing who should answer a difficult question and recording the next action properly.

That is the approach in this book. Start with a clear mandate. Research companies before deciding whom to contact. Check the first batch carefully. Be honest about your role. Treat a booked appointment as the start of qualification, then manage what happens after the call.

The same discipline helps a seller's adviser identify potential buyers and helps a corporate development team map merger partners. Their objectives differ, so their searches and messages must differ too. This guide keeps those distinctions visible rather than using one acquisition script for every situation.

You will find practical instructions, sample search strings, original message templates and working forms. Use the examples to understand the method, then adapt the criteria to your own mandate. A search that works for a regional engineering buyer may be unsuitable for a software investor. A founder's title may identify the right person, but it does not prove who owns the shares.

The aim is a pipeline you can explain: where a company came from, why it fits, what has been verified, who has been approached and what should happen next. That is a more useful asset than a long list of names.

01 | Write the mandate before the search

Define the transaction you are trying to originate

An acquisition mandate is a set of decisions. What sort of business are you seeking? Why should you be its next owner? What can you fund and operate? Where are you willing to invest time? If the answers are vague, every interesting company will appear to qualify.

Write a one-page brief before opening Sales Navigator. Specify the transaction objective, target market, business model, geography, size, ownership preferences and exclusions. Separate firm requirements from preferences. A regulated activity you cannot operate may be a hard exclusion. A slightly smaller headcount may be acceptable if the business has the right customers and management team.

Distinguish revenue, profit and transaction value. A company with £5 million of sales is not automatically a £5 million acquisition. LinkedIn headcount and revenue categories can help you organise research; neither substitutes for financial information obtained during a transaction process.

Match the brief to your role

Role	Research objective	First conversation
Business buyer	Find suitable acquisition targets	Establish interest and understand the owner
Sell-side adviser	Identify plausible buyers for a mandate	Confirm strategic fit and appetite discreetly
Merger or corporate development team	Map complementary organisations	Explore whether a strategic discussion is useful
Origination provider	Research and introduce prospects within an agreed scope	Qualify interest and hand over to the principal

Be precise about authority. A self-funded buyer should not imply an institutional fund mandate. An adviser should not imply a signed engagement if one does not

exist. A research provider should not negotiate acquisition terms on behalf of a client without the relevant authority.

A worked acquisition brief

Fictional example: A UK buyer seeks an established facilities-services company with a regional customer base and repeat contracts. The initial research bands are 11-50 or 51-200 employees and a revenue indication of £2 million-£10 million where available. The buyer prefers an owner-led company with a manager who could support a transition. Pure recruitment agencies and newly formed businesses are excluded.

Those bands are starting assumptions. A subcontractor-heavy operator may have few listed employees yet substantial activity. A small company may be an attractive add-on. Record exceptions for review instead of forcing every firm into a platform category.

Translate the brief into research rules

For each requirement, state how it will be checked. Industry can be screened in Sales Navigator, then confirmed on the company website. Location may mean headquarters, operating territory or customer base; specify which. Ownership should be checked against suitable corporate records and clarified with the relevant person. Profitability and funding requirements belong in later qualification, with appropriate confidentiality arrangements.

Keep two columns: **evidence available now** and **questions for later**. This prevents public-data research from pretending to be due diligence. Finish the brief with the name of the person who can approve changes. A researcher should never quietly widen the mandate merely to produce a larger list.