

**BUSINESS NEWS**

# Chamber of Commerce's Business Development Program provides tools for sustainability, growth and success

By Malena Charur  
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Members of the Laredo Chamber of Commerce completed the 2022 Business Development Certification Program during a Certification ceremony at Falcon Bank on Sept. 15, 2022.

Last December the Laredo Chamber of Commerce unveiled its curriculum for the 2022 Business Development Certification Program. Initially launched in 2016 as the Business Development Seminar Series, the 8-module course has become one of the Chamber's hallmark initiatives providing business

owners with the essential tools for sustainability, growth, and success.

"The Chamber has always prided itself on its ability to provide relevant and essential tools for growth and success. However, in times such as these, the information provided through these modules is critical," said previously Gabriela Morales, Chamber President and CEO.

The Certification consisted of eight different modules that empowered businesses of all sizes. The modules took place at Falcon Bank. Some of the modules included: Entrepreneurial Innovation, Small Business Tax Du-

ties, Hire and Retain Employees, and Expand your Business with Ecommerce, among others.

**About the Chamber**

Founded in 1915, the Laredo Chamber of Commerce is Laredo's and Webb County's longest running business organization. Headquartered at 2310 San Bernardo Ave. since 1974, the Laredo Chamber has been an advocate for the local business community for over a century. With 608 members representative of every industry in the community, the Laredo Chamber is accredited with 5 stars by the U.S.

Chamber of Commerce. Only 200 chambers out of 7000 across the country are accredited by this organization.

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Courtesy photo/Laredo Chamber of Commerce

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**BUSINESS NEWS**

# LinkedIn ran social experiments on 20 million users over five years

By Natasha Singer  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

LinkedIn ran experiments on more than 20 million users over five years that, while intended to improve how the platform worked for members, could have affected some people's livelihoods, according to a new study.

In experiments conducted around the world from 2015 to 2019, LinkedIn randomly varied the proportion of weak and strong contacts suggested by its "People You May Know" algorithm — the company's automated system for recommending new connections to its users. The tests were detailed in a study published this month in the journal Science and co-authored by researchers at Linked-

In, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University and Harvard Business School.

LinkedIn's algorithmic experiments may come as a surprise to millions of people because the company did not inform users that the tests were underway.

Tech giants like LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network, routinely run large-scale experiments in which they try out different versions of app features, web designs and algorithms on different people. The long-standing practice, called A/B testing, is intended to improve consumers' experiences and keep them engaged, which helps the companies make money through premium membership fees or advertising. Users

often have no idea that companies are running the tests on them.

But the changes made by LinkedIn are indicative of how such tweaks to widely used algorithms can become social engineering experiments with potentially life-altering consequences for many people. Experts who study the societal effects of computing said conducting long, large-scale experiments on people that could affect their job prospects, in ways that are invisible to them, raised questions about industry transparency and research oversight.

"The findings suggest that some users had better access to job opportunities or a meaningful difference in access to job opportunities," said Michael Zim-

mer, an associate professor of computer science and the director of the Center for Data, Ethics and Society at Marquette University.

The study in Science tested an influential theory in sociology called "the strength of weak ties," which maintains that people are more likely to gain employment and other opportunities through arms-length acquaintances than through close friends.

The researchers analyzed how LinkedIn's algorithmic changes had affected users' job mobility. They found that relatively weak social ties on LinkedIn proved twice as effective in securing employment as stronger social ties.

In a statement, LinkedIn said

that during the study it had "acted consistently with" the company's user agreement, privacy policy and member settings. The privacy policy notes that LinkedIn uses members' personal data for research purposes. The statement added that the company used the latest, "non-invasive" social science techniques to answer important research questions "without any experimentation on members."

LinkedIn, which is owned by Microsoft, did not directly answer a question about how the company had considered the potential long-term consequences of its experiments on users' employment and economic status. But the company said the research had not disproportionately advantaged some users.

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