

A blue-tinted, blurred photograph of business professionals walking in a city. The image is used as a background for the text. Two men in suits are prominent in the foreground, walking away from the camera. The background shows a city skyline with various buildings.

33 SOCIAL SELLING TIPS

BY SOCIAL SELLING THOUGHT LEADERS

FORWARD

Social Selling is the process of using your professional brand to fill your pipeline with the right people, insights and relationships. Social media is the next evolution of the sales profession. Just as the telephone and email changed the landscape and made sales people more productive, social media is the next frontier.

When stats are put out that 90% of decision makers no longer respond to cold calls or emails, we need to find a new way to get buyers attention. In fact we know from other research that the typical B2B buying process has 5.4 decision makers and this makes selling even more complex.

Going in “cold” is no longer a viable solution for sales professionals. Leveraging connections and existing relationships to get introduced to decision makers has proven to have a much higher success rate. Most sales people I know are the stereotypical Type A personality and they expect nothing less than to crush it. In order for them to exceed their goals they have had to adapt, and by adapt I mean become experts in the use of social media.

“Going in ‘cold’ is no longer a viable solution.”

What this tells me and thousands of other companies is that sales professionals need to become social sellers. From prospecting activities to becoming better engaged with their customers, social media is scalable and delivers business results.

Sales professionals that play the long game and start by adding value to their networks by educating them on the industry and trends will reap the largest rewards.

Remember, in life “visibility creates opportunity” and social media can be used as either a soapbox or a mountain top to stand on to get your message heard.

In the following pages you will hear from some of the leading minds in social selling. Their advice is actionable and insightful.

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ARE YOU A SOCIAL SELLER OR ARE YOU A RELATIONSHIP MARKETER?

A Social Seller uses their social media to try to sell their product or service to the people in their community. A Relationship Marketer uses their social media to strike up and nurture relationships.

The long term goal is the same, working towards gaining new loyal customers; but the strategy is quite different.

As human beings we are inundated with advertising every single day. We see billboards on the way to work, "Buy Now" in our newspaper and "Biggest Sale Ever" on TV, not to mention the all-annoying blinking or pop-up ads on way to many websites. So why do we like, connect or follow a business on social media? At first it could be because "Something is on Sale Now"... but what keeps us interested and from not UnLiking, UnFollowing or disconnecting?

That's where the real work and loyalty building happens! People continue to be a part of your social media because you're giving them a reason to be there and it's not "Buy This" or "Clearance

**“Are you building
influence on
social media?”**

That". We stay because we are getting some sort of value or answer or solution that is of great interest to us. It's something that holds our attention that is different from the everyday sales we are almost numb to.

We also stay because we may like the way we're being influenced. Perhaps we're learning a little something from someone we've grown to trust, or maybe we like the positive karma we see daily. Whatever it is, we know it's not because we want to see more sales ads.

The foundation of any social media strategy is to build influence within your community. Influence leads to 'know, like & trust' which leads to future, loyal, customers.

In the ever-evolving world of digital marketing and social media, there are always new tricks, algorithm changes and tactics that will make you thousands of dollars! You can buy into that if you wish and it may even work for a short time, but the truth is that you must build an authentic community where your members see you as a reliable expert in your field.

When it's time to find someone to work with or even recommend to a colleague, people are far more likely to choose their favorite industry expert that they've taken the time to get to know. The quality of that relationship is the most long lasting - Patience is key. Building influence and an authentic community in any social space takes time, work and commitment; but then again, doesn't everything worth having in life?

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GET MORE CLIENT REFERRALS WITH LINKEDIN

Social Sales Link defines Social Selling as 4 specific stages.

First, Listening to your prospects to understand what they care about. Second, educating them in what matters to them. Third, prospecting through warm market referrals and strategic content marketing. Fourth, researching your prospects, their industry, their competition and all other intelligence that can help you position yourself as the solution to their want, need or problem.

When it comes to prospecting, typically a good business development person will tell you that much of their business comes from client referrals. It may sound something like this:

Salesperson: "Ms. Client, thank you for your business. Are you happy with the our?"

Client: "Oh, yes Mr. Salesperson, we have been very happy and we love working with you and your company."

Salesperson: "That is terrific, Ms. Client, the way we grow our business has always been through introductions from our happy

**“LinkedIn is a searchable
rolodex of all your
connections’ connections”**

clients. Do you know of anyone else that could use our products and services?"

Client: "I can't think of anyone off hand right now, but if I do think of someone I will certainly be happy to introduce you."

Not exactly how we had hoped it would go. But now we have LinkedIn as a powerful tool so this conversation will be much more productive.

Before you go out on the client visit, do the following:

1. Connect with your client on LinkedIn
2. Check out their contacts from the search bar
3. Make a list of 5 prospects that meet your criteria

And here is how the conversation might go:

Salesperson: "Ms. Client, when we connected on LinkedIn I noticed that you were linked to a few folks who would be great introductions for me, would it be alright if I ran them by you?"

Client: "Of course, I would be happy to help!"

Salesperson: "Thank you so much for offering to make these introductions, you can just copy us both in an email and I can take it from there. To make it easier for you would you like me to send you a short introduction paragraph that you can use?"

Client: "That would be great, thanks."

Salesperson: "I will get that to you by the end of the day. Also, I would be happy to make introductions for you as well, who are you looking to meet?"

If we did this for each client our pipeline would double!

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SUCCEED WITH SOCIAL SELLING IN A BUYER 2.0 WORLD

Recent research shows that today's buyers are far more sophisticated in their purchasing cycles than ever before. There is a plethora of information, data, and product reviews at everyone's fingertips. The ability to research even a simple transaction like buying new tires for your car is amazing these days. You can literally find thousands of quotes, articles, reviews of specific tire performance, compare local dealers, etc. in 15 minutes or less. Before you set foot into that tire store, you're so much more informed than a typical tire buyer just 10-15 years ago. In the B2B market, a new level of financial buyer called 'Supply Chain' can add to the complexity. Buyers are highly informed, independent, have many purchase options, and they are willing to do their own leg work ahead of engaging a sales person. We call this Buyer 2.0. In order to be successful in today's B2B sales marketplace, sellers need a new approach to aligning with your buyers. In the recently published book, *The Collaborative Sale* (by Keith M. Eades and Timothy T. Sullivan, Wiley 2014) sales people are presented with three key roles they need to embrace to succeed:

1. **A Micro-Marketer** (i.e. someone that can generate business demand)
2. **A Visualizer** (i.e. collaborate with the customer to form a vision of the solution)
3. **A Value Driver** (i.e. confront risk adverse buyers by positioning value early and often)

So what does this have to do with Social Selling? Let's look more in depth at the Micro-Marketer role. To move back to the front of the sales cycle and engage with buyers early, sellers must incorporate tactics typically considered marketing's responsibility. Begin by developing your Personal Brand online via LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+ and other social profiles.

Keep your professional profiles professional and focus your positioning around your unique or advanced expertise.

Next, build credibility in the marketplace. Participate in online discussions, write and share content relevant to your customers, be aware of industry trends, seek referrals from clients and coworkers, and work to be viewed as a subject matter expert in a given field. Connect with industry experts, clients and potential prospects by engaging in social conversations. Most importantly, develop Situational Fluency in your market so you contribute valuable and relevant insights to your social sphere.

While most sales people agree with this principle, many lag behind voicing objections that social media is time consuming, they have a quota to pursue, or social selling doesn't yield quick results. There are many tools available to sellers to streamline their efficiency and effectiveness in social selling. For example, LinkedIn Sales Navigator helps salespeople search for potential prospects within LinkedIn's 300+M member base. These searches can be saved and used for drip marketing and other social marketing campaigns.

To align with buyers and create demand, social selling is essential in today's ever-changing global marketplace.

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FROM LA TIMES TO TRIGGERS ONLINE: A SOCIAL SELLING TRANSFORMATION

When I asked my client how he's gotten business over the years, he said, "I read the Los Angeles Time."

My wonder quickly turned into admiration at his apparent cold calling chops. He's drummed up a good amount of business over the years by reading the newspaper in search of management changes, mergers, or new product development. When he found something of interest, he'd pick up the phone and ask if they needed his services.

It was clear from his success, he knew how to sell, and he says that for him, "it's a numbers game". But more than numbers, for him it's a timing game. Well, what if he could find 20x the number of triggers in real time? What would his business look like then?

As you probably guessed, a lot better. Here's a summary of how he's started to prospect and sell socially:

1. He created his own **curated newspaper** using Feedly to feed

“Using LinkedIn, he focuses on leads with whom he can get a introduction or referral.”

relevant blogs, company-specific and industry news in real-time.

2. He **shares content** via Buffer to his network and LinkedIn Groups to help him fish where the fish are - and demonstrate he's

up-to-date about his industry.

3. Using LinkedIn, he **focused on leads** with whom he can get an introduction or referral, increasing his conversion rate.

4. He finds a lot of information about a person by **reviewing their LinkedIn profile**, which helps him make a more relevant pitch on a call or via email.

5. He's conducting **Advanced Searches** on LinkedIn to find his ideal buyer at his ideal company.

6. He regularly **updates his LinkedIn profile** with new content so readers never have to assume his expertise.

After setting up a social selling regimen, my client is finding better leads at a swifter pace with better timing, and as a consequence, he's closing more business. The interesting thing is, his selling routine hasn't changed much.

He's just using better tools more appropriate for the online, digital and social business world we live in – and he's reaping the rewards for his willingness to adapt.

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SOCIAL SELLING: EVOLUTION NOT REVOLUTION

Nothing works on its own! Let me begin by saying that social selling is an evolution not a revolution - so the concept should not be feared, rather embraced as a simple part of a sequence that is gaining value.

I liken it to the Fibonacci sequence, remember that day in Math when the teacher wrote; 0,1,1,2,3,5,8 on the board and asked for a show of hands for who could recognise the pattern? Looking back, I seem to remember myself the Usain Bolt of the class with my hand first up.

Like the Fibonacci sequence, the way in which we interact with customers has followed a similar and consistent pattern. If we attribute values to these changing mediums of communication we realise that without the early denominations, the sequence doesn't work. Indulge me...

Selling behaviour hasn't changed but how we communicate our propositions to customers have and their respective buying behaviour certainly has. Once upon a time, selling was pretty much carried out on foot, door knocking and intruding on buyer's time, let's call that 1. Then AGB invented the telephone; energy expenditure was reduced, efficiency improved, communication changed, yet still we intruded on buyers time, let's call this evolution 2.

As far as the internet is now from its humble beginnings – its primary form of communication was email and when it came along, we didn't stop calling but found a new way to initiate conversations with customers. What is interesting about email is it is the first time we gave control to the buyer in terms of operating on their time; they could engage us at their interest. So email gets a 3, you can see where I'm going here.

Not to ignore the incontrovertible effect that the evolution of the mobile device has had, from phone to minicomputer, offering buyers two things; using the internet to research and communicating via social media, that's 5.

Notably, on these smart devices, making a call has slipped to the 5th most popular thing to do. Buyers want everything now on their own time with as much information and the means of as effortless an experience as possible. 2/3 of their own procurement process has already happened on their own time before they engage anyone from a potential supplier.

Social very simply allows sellers to play in this space, in a time when buyers are operating in relative status quo. This is the time to be active, influential and creative in communicating your value, so that when the time comes to operate on your time, you are ready to win deals against the opposition.

Social is a component in a sequence of mediums required to be a successful seller, the onus may be greater but to negate what has gone before would be foolish.

A master of social selling knows its value, its capabilities and role in creating the true value for customers.

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CASHIN' IN ON LINKEDIN: SOCIAL SELLING IS FINDING, CONNECTING AND ENGAGING

Five years ago that I started using LinkedIn's search engine to find "investors" with whom I could establish new business relationships. My initial goal was to attract cash buyers to south Florida (where I live) to purchase undervalued, residential properties.

My desired target market became quickly and clearly defined—investors that lived in the northeastern U.S. and in eastern Canada. Climate and home value differences clearly played in favor of my future success.

I identified 3 categories of home buyers and investors. First, was the second home or vacation market. Florida is heavily populated from November to April every season with affluent "snowbirds" escaping the cold, northern weather.

Second, seniors have been permanently retiring to southern U. S. locales such as Arizona, southern California and southern Florida for many years and that trend has continued uninterrupted.

Lastly, long term ROI (return on Investment) investors were eager to find rental properties for cash flow in the short term and price appreciation in future years. This group was the most intriguing because I realized that I could benefit three ways financially by managing their purchases, placing tenants, and collecting a finder fee for the original purchase! In hockey that trifecta is called the "hat trick."

The current C.E.O. of LinkedIn, Jeff Weiner, commented recently that social selling involves three stages: finding, connecting and engaging. Since my geographic market was clear, I then focused upon the "finding" activities via LinkedIn groups.

LinkedIn currently has around 2 million groups. By seeking and joining real estate-related groups I was able to find a significant number of professionals. Since I prospected exclusively on LinkedIn I enjoyed the benefit of an audience of business professionals familiar and largely open to investment opportunities. I love LinkedIn's groups since email addresses were not needed to connect. The added fact that 50 groups can be joined provided me with tens of thousands of potential leads.

Engaging was not difficult since I held a Florida real estate license (since the late 1990s). That license established the credibility necessary in order to close deals. Investors came from states like Minnesota, Wisconsin, Montreal and Quebec. Some purchased properties from me; some hired me to manage their properties and some have asked me to look for additional deals that meet their criteria. Others have referred their friends.

Even though current home prices in south Florida are higher I would still undertake the same strategy were I to start fresh today. Social selling still contains the same three stage process and LinkedIn has gone on to greatly enhance their #1 status as the vehicle of choice for conducting business with professionals worldwide. It's time to keep on cashin' in.

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WHAT IS SOCIAL SELLING ANYWAY?

I was fortunate and honored to be recognized recently by Forbes as one of the Top 30 Social Salespeople in the World which was great but it got me thinking – why and how did I get on this list? I must be doing something right. So I decided to sit down and think about what Social Selling really meant to me and write about it in case anyone was interested and was looking for some direction.

Sales is inherently social so I don't think Social Selling is anything new. I do think using all the social sales tool to help sell effectively is new and continues to evolve. # My approach to 'social selling' can be broken down into two main components: 1) Direct and 2) Indirect.

The direct component of social selling is leveraging social media tools like Twitter, FB, LinkedIn, InsideView, Gagein to look for things to make connection to people you want to target and get meetings with them. For example, I see the CEO of one of my target accounts tweeted something about his or her focus on operational efficiencies in the coming year.

**“Are you building
influence on
social media?”**

If my product or service can help with operational efficiencies then I can either tweet them about it directly or send them an e-mail explaining the value I might be able to add to their situation based on what they said. The whole point is to look for

information about what people or companies are doing or saying so you can be highly relevant to them when you reach out.

The indirect component of social selling is about building your own personal brand so people eventually come to you and see you as an industry expert, not just a sales person. This takes more time and doesn't provide the instant gratification that we seemingly all crave more and more these days. It's all about adding value to your target market in my opinion.

This is why I write my blogs and always try to add value by not just talking about the theory of something but actually giving people useful tips on what to do and how to do it. I post or re-tweet articles not just about sales but about business topics that I think are important to my target market. I join groups on LinkedIn and answer questions people have without pointing them back to my website or telling them I can help solve their problem if they call me.

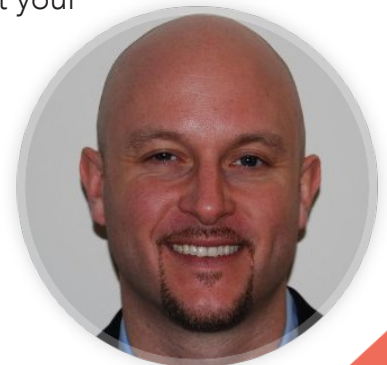
So, with all that, take time to think through your “Social Sales” approach. My recommendation would be not only to look for information you can use to connect with people but also position yourself as an industry expert by sharing information that is relevant. This will help you throughout your career no matter what job you have.

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3 LESSONS FROM 3 YEARS OF LINKEDIN SALES TRAINING

In May of 2011, I presented my first LinkedIn Sales Training Seminar. After a 20-year career in technology sales and sales management, I started training B2B sales reps on soft selling skills like: prospecting, presenting, negotiating and closing.

Part of the Prospecting training involved using LinkedIn to connect with decision makers. One day in Feb 2011, I was teaching a public seminar of 50 people. The attendees kept asking questions about LinkedIn. An attendee asked; "Why don't you just do an entire workshop on LinkedIn sales techniques?" "If I did, how many of you would pay to attend it?" I inquired.

Recognizing the opportunity, I said, "OK, it will take me three months to create the program and I expect all of you to be back here in May." I booked the conference room for May and begin creating and promoting the webinar.

You know the saying that it's be LUCKY than GOOD?! Well, guess what happened the week before my first LI workshop?

“Social selling is not the same as social media.”

LinkedIn went IPO. Everyone wanted to know more about LinkedIn and how to use it to grow sales...and there I was with my seminar. It sold out and I've been focused on LinkedIn sales training ever since.

Here are three things I've learned in 3 years of LinkedIn training:

1. Social Selling is not the same as Social Media. A lot of companies have the Social Media Marketing person do an hour or two of training for the sales team. That's a great start but it is not enough time. Plus, Marketing people rarely possess the real-world selling experience that is required to put lessons into context. Context and credibility result in higher adoption by the sales team.

2. LinkedIn changes... a lot. Companies that had LinkedIn training a year or two ago need a refresher. Features come and go like TV talk shows hosts. Many of my clients start with a live custom program for the entire sales team then, in 6-9 months, shift to On Demand training for refreshers and on-boarding of new hires.

3. Corporate LinkedIn strategies involve more than individual LinkedIn skills. Over the years, I've focused more on corporate implementations than on teaching individual LinkedIn skills. While individual skills are the foundation of a corporate program, a corporate implementation also includes training sales managers how to manage social selling practices and how to involve Marketing for its content expertise. I am excited about what the next three years will bring. How has your LinkedIn usage changed in the past three years?

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SOCIAL SELLING PROSPECTS AREN'T SOCIAL

Plenty of your prospects aren't active on social media. The percentage of customers, prospects and partners in your industry may vary depending on comfortability with technology and a variety of other factors. But that doesn't mean social selling won't still work. You just won't be able to go as direct. Here are six ways to drive measurable sales and revenue from social selling, even if your direct prospects aren't themselves on social.

1. Listen for buying signals from elsewhere in organization. Think through how others in the organization would describe the problem or pain, and listen for that. Respond through more traditional channels with your primary prospect or decision maker, but don't ignore the buying signals elsewhere in the organization.

2. Follow and listen to their peers. Who else on their team is active on social? Peers who run other departments? This relates to their reports anyway. Just because the CMO will ultimately approve the PO, doesn't mean he or she is your fastest path to getting the deal.

“Listen for buying signals from elsewhere in organization.”

3. Follow and listen to their direct reports. Your primary prospect is likely to delegate research and recommendations to their reports anyway. Just because the CMO will ultimately approve the PO, doesn't mean he or she is your fastest path to

getting the deal.

4. Follow their company. Someone inside your prospect's organization is sharing information through social, content and PR channels. What can those trigger events and news items tell you about your prospect's needs or priorities? If the company sets a public goal for going carbon neutral in five years, for example, how would that translate into goals and priorities for your CIO target? Or your head of facilities target? What could you offer them that helps them participate in the corporate goal and look good to their boss?

5. Follow their competitors. If you're watching competitor news and updates actively, you very well may be the first person to bring those insights up to your targets. Use RivalIQ, for example, to get an alert every time your prospect's competitors change their descriptions, SEO title and meta tags, get something particularly viral on social, etc.

6. Use Google Alerts, Ofunnel and LinkedIn to watch their activity online anywhere. Just because your prospects weren't active on social yesterday, doesn't mean they won't start today. Use tools such as Google Alerts and LinkedIn to get notified when prospects do get more socially active.

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SELLING WAS ALWAYS SOCIAL

If you're in sales, you can't hide from the hype about social selling. Social is a state of mind that informs your execution of the sale, an approach to selling, and how you choose to engage with your buyers, and take them through the sales and buying cycle.

There is a lot of talk in the shift of power with respect to information and its availability and use by buyer. The story is that in the old days, sellers held the balance of power, because they had access to information the buyers didn't. This left buyers dependent on sellers for information and as a result shifted the balance to the seller.

But this is really more about state of mind than anything else. Smart sellers would leverage that information to help the buyer make the right decision. Information is a commodity, the real power lies in knowledge, and smart sellers use that knowledge in mutually beneficial ways, and very much in a "Social" way.

You only need look at some of the things Joe Gerard did to

“But this is really more about state of mind than anything else.”

become the world's number one car sales person. Joe was social long before a face was a book. While Joe may have lacked the tools, he did not lack the attitude and habits that make some of today's social sellers successful.

Just as there are a lot of stats that show the use of social and peer networks by decision makers in advance of and during the buying process, there are as many showing they are overwhelmed and confused by the volume and conflicting nature of said information. Helping them make sense of the noise is a real value, helping is about as social as you can get.

If Marshall McLuhan were selling today, he would no doubt be a social seller, but he would be a bad seller, because in sales the medium is not the message, which is the trap many social sellers fall into, thinking that the tools will make them good sellers.

While tools and developments in technology have brought efficiencies to the process, at its heart social selling is really much more about the way you view sales and more importantly your customer.

That outlook will give you the advantage regardless of which tools you chose to ply your craft, how you view and choose to deal with your buyer. I love the expression: "A fool with a tool is still a fool", just because you have a twitter account, and a million and five connections on LinkedIn, does not make you social, it is and always will be you execution and intent as a seller.

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TWITTER FOR SALES REPS: BIG HAT - NO CATTLE

“Big hat and no cattle” (US, idiomatic) Full of big talk but lacking action, power, or substance;

Warning: If you are someone who makes their living in/around/by ‘social,’ I’m not writing this particular post for you. I am writing for the thousands of sales reps who are being advised to use Twitter to engage with prospects and establish ‘thought leadership.’ I love Twitter. I love seeing what my friends & colleagues are chatting about. I love getting RTs and favorites and all those things that make me feel so popular. And then damn Twitter had to give me analytics and allow me to see exactly how engaged my ‘followers’ are.

Net net: My bubble was burst! At the time of this writing I have ~5K followers. Not a huge number, but not inconsequential. When Twitter released analytics, I took a peek at the data.

I discovered that while Twitter feels great around activity, it’s less so around engagement. Put more simply -- people may view and

“The average per-tweet engagement rate is roughly 0.1-0.3%”

RT your stuff, but rarely do they (or anyone else) actually click through and read what you are sharing.

Concrete stats from a tweet: It was Favorite’d 3 times (activity); It was RT’d 2 times (activity); It had 3x my normal reach (activity).

Only 8 people actually clicked on the link (engagement). So by simple math we have: 4870 followers + 2 RTs (assume followers of 1.5K each) = total audience of 7,870. #8 clicks / 7,870 = engagement rate of .1%. That knocked me for a little loop. So we decided to take a deeper dive into the data selecting 25 twitter accounts to analyze. (Big names in the Sales game with follower counts ranging from 2K to 20K., 5 tweets per test subject). The average per-tweet “engagement” rate is roughly 0.1-0.3% regardless of follower count.

So where does this take us?

Well, if you are salesperson who wants to become a ‘thought leader’ to your prospects by sharing content and information, you might want to invest your time elsewhere. Think LinkedIn updates. Think personal nurture emails. Your average Twitter user sees at most 10-maybe-15% of their total stream. That being said Twitter can have huge benefits. Here are just a few that come to my mind:

- You will uncover prospects that aren’t in your territory
- You will uncover prospects that are in your territory talking about topics that make them more relevant.

Net net. Take a break from all that thought “sharing” to turn around and see if anyone is actually following you in a meaningful way.

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THINK BIGGER THAN SOCIAL SELLING

Though I maintain my steadfast passion for igniting sales transformation, I do not believe that placing emphasis on improving just one silo of the business makes sense. Not if you expect anything to change. I don't believe that the conversation should continue to focus on social selling or social media marketing, with each executing their strategies in a vacuum.

Organizations need to become much more focused on becoming a "social business" and creating an experience that WOWS throughout the entire customer acquisition and retention lifecycle.

Customer Experience = Sales

According to a CEI Survey, 86% of buyers will pay MORE for a better customer experience. But only 1% of customers feel that vendors consistently meet their expectations.

The challenges facing sales leaders will not be solved with a few crash courses on how to put social selling to work in their organization. Revenue goals are not achieved by sales alone. Sales may carry the quota, but other functional departments – Marketing, Service, Operations, Accounting and the C-Suite – play a big role in wins and losses.

A go/no go decision can happen with the first marketing email a prospect receives or webinar they attend. It might be the over eager sales reps hounding them that turns them off. Every interaction – positive and negative – leads to revenue or not.

And if you think that once a customer always a customer...think again. In 2013, only 37% of brands received good or excellent customer experience index scores. That leaves a 64% gap of brands earning a rating ranging from OK to very poor from their customers.

Experience Matters

Aberdeen reported that "85% of business leaders who participated in their 2012 Chief Service Officer (CSO) Summit, stated that their organization was placing an increased importance on customer service, given the constraints of the global economy and an extremely competitive marketplace." Isn't it interesting that eight-five percent of business leaders said "service" was important, but there was very little improvement in overall experience statistics in 2013.

Why aren't more companies focused on experience?

It's hard work. All departments must come together to design the experience that a potential buyer and customer will encounter. For experience, as a strategy to work, you need an organized and phased approach for integrating the right processes into your business. Everything has to be considered from the prospect and customer point of view. That's why I believe banging the drum of – all you need is social selling – is no longer good enough. Experience – at all levels, with all departments and with all employees – drives revenue.

At the "zero moment of truth", when the buyer is pondering whether to talk to sales or determining if they buy from your company or not, how will their experience inform their decision?

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THE SOCIAL SELLING OPPORTUNITY IMPACTS ORGANIZATION AND CULTURE

There are many companies today that understand "social" as the "new phone" - since many of us social selling advocates argue that cold calling is "dead"- and probably it is our own fault.

Sometimes talking about the "new phone" feels like the easiest way to help business leaders hop on the boat of Social Selling. Talking on those terms may make them jump to the quite straightforward conclusion that social selling is the "new tele-sales", only now with social networks; even further, that all the fuzz boils down to creating a centralized specialized group, that will provide leads to the sales team who, in their turn, will close the deal.

Some companies are ready to enable this centralized team with tools like Socedo, Hootsuite, Hubspot, Marketo, LinkedIn's Sales Navigator and others in order to generate leads. They DO get that quite easily.

The "new tele-sales" is a quick sell and those companies will do

"Data shows that buyers are online and on social networks."

get SOME results, but we are not unleashing the full potential of Social Selling here.

In order to achieve the estimated 20-25% productivity increase

potential described by McKinsey we need to go ALL the way in our journey and that means# Enabling Sales teams with TOOLS, TRAINING and GUIDANCE (cultural change management).

But data shows that buyers are online and on social networks, new ways to increase top lines and Sales teams equipped with Social Selling definitely looks like THE WAY to go. Today, that is a tough sell though. Today, it's a LEAP OF FAITH.

On the culture side, the implementation of a Social Selling program really requires a change of culture for most companies: move away from a transaction-based sale to building a relationship that entitles a buying advice. Jill Rowley, the Social Selling princess, often comments that she "does not sell, but she helps clients in their buying process."

It's not tools, processes or information that need your main efforts, it's people, organization and culture. Organization and culture-people are probably the true challenges that we will encounter when deploying a Social selling program at an organization.

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THE THREE R'S: RESPECT, RELATIONSHIP AND REVENUE

Remember this saying when striving for success: It's not WHAT you know, it's WHO you know.

Your main mission with social media is to get people to respect you, engage with you (build relationships) and to use those two techniques to build actual revenue. There are various relationships that you will have in your lifetime, and all of them can be used to garner revenue.

As a socially adept woman, I've been able to gain clients and leads just from bringing a smile to someone's face. Not only are we all looking for success, but we're always searching for connections. Love, friendships, even the deepest rivalry can be used to your and your revenues advantage. It all depends on how these relationships are interwoven with your business.

Respect

No one wants to listen to you if your words are hollow. Building respect has as much to do with how you're saying the things you need to say as it does with WHAT you're saying. To properly build respect, you need to know something that others don't. When you can walk into a room and change the lives of at least two people you meet (even with something as simple as a life-hack), you are destined for social success. This doesn't mean that you have to be a genius. As a social seller, I could teach a cold caller things that would blow their mind. It's all based on perspective and being able to read people and understand what they NEED.

Relationships (Trust)

Relationships are basically everything you're working for with social selling. Every status you post, every article, every blog you point to should be ripe with personality. To grow socially, you need to be (surprise, surprise) SOCIAL. When you're absolutely genuine

in your tactics, people take notice. They're not looking for someone to sell them shoes. They're looking for a friend. People want to feel like they're connected to you. And they are. Networking events are successful because they bring people who are searching for something together. Like puzzle pieces, you find the right matches for your business. Once you've wowed someone with your work ethic, or your knowledge, or just your personality in general, the last R tumbles in pretty quickly.

Revenue

As people come to appreciate you as an MVP of your field, they want to get to know you. When they understand that you're genuine and not trying to trick them, they want to build a relationship with you. And when you're a friend to your leads, you are the first person they think of when they need something in your field. You're their thought leader. They respect your mindset and trust you to show them the right way. And that trust leads to cold hard revenue.

It's not hard to be authentic. It's beneficial. Learning to navigate the social globe takes a lot of easy smiles, winning personality and a dedication to actually building a following.

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HOW CAN BLOGGING HELP YOU SELL?

Stage 1 – Answer customer questions on your company blog

You write the answer to every question your customers have ever asked you, as honestly as possible.

Stage 2 – People visit your site

People go to Google and ask a question about the product they are looking to buy or the problem they are looking to solve. Chances are you have been asked the same question before. As a result, you should write the answer to that question on your blog so the potential new customer finds your answer when searching on Google. The chances are that none of your competitors have written the answer to the that question.

Stage 3 - Fill out form

Once a potential customer has landed on your site, hopefully it is well designed and easy to use. Hopefully the information you provide on your website is so comprehensive and informative they want to take things further and give you their contact details.

Stage 4 – Become a lead

Once they give you their contact details, they can enter the sales process. Depending on the type of product you sell and the length of the sales process, this may involve a number of different things, such as; Adding them to your newsletter to keep them “warm” until they are ready to buy; Sending them further information to help them on their buying journey; A sales person contacting them to see how they can help and to qualify the lead. If they’ve already ordered your product you may skip this and move straight to stage 5.

Stage 5 – Sale

Once the lead has been contacted by the sales person then a high percentage of the well qualified leads will be converted to sales. Hey presto BLOG = SALES.

What to write about?

You should write about anything and everything your customers ask you. How much does X cost? What is the different between X & Y? What are the pros and cons of X? Problems with X? What are the best types of X? Reviews of X. This honest, open, transparent approach to your business will help quickly earn you trust from your potential customers. Your goal is to help the potential customer make the right buying decision. You need to have the confidence to stand up and say why they shouldn't buy from you, as much as why they should. You are not right for every customer so do your best to explain why.

Cost and price are one of the least talked about things on a company website. Most companies are scared to talk about how much their products cost until they have had a sales meeting with the customer. You should help them understand roughly how much your product or service will cost them.

Your sole objective should be to educate your customers to make the right buying decision. If you are 100% honest and you tell people when your product is not right for them, in the long run you will be better off. They will be more likely to buy from you when your products do match their requirements and they will be more likely to recommend you to others.

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CAN YOU KEEP TRACK OF BUYERS?

Patience is something that doesn't always come natural to sales professionals or sales managers. The drive for sales means that shortcuts are often taken and means that more potential buyers are lost. Every potential buyer is important and if you burn through potential buyers then this will make the social selling process much harder. When you research your buyers carefully you will get to know them and find a common thread by which you're able to make an easier introduction to connect to them.

First you need to learn where your buyers share their activities. Is it via LinkedIn or Twitter or both? These two channels are likely to be most actively used by business professionals. But be careful they're not always regular users on both and some won't even be sending updates on these networks.

Do your research first on the individual and the company, follow the company on LinkedIn and research any articles, where your potential buyer could be mentioned or featured.

**“The only thing you
can shoot for is
trust.”**

There are two very useful ways that you can keep track of your buyers without making it obvious to them. These are 'Twitter Lists' and 'LinkedIn Tagging'. In Twitter you can create a private list and add Twitter handles to your buyer list. Equally in LinkedIn you

can save someone to your connections database inside LinkedIn, without inviting them yet and in the process of saving the prospect you can tag them. This allows you to do more research on them and find a common thread in their profile, their tweets, or anything else that you can find that allows the two of you have something in common.

People buy from people they know, like and trust. At the start of building a relationship with your buyer the only thing you can shoot for is 'Trust'. Building trust has to be very obvious from the very first contact you make with your buyer or you kill any chance of starting a dialogue.

So what's the solution? A direct invite to connect has to be the best option. At least you will know 100% for sure that they have accepted your request or not. You can also be assured that they will receive reminders from your invitation at least 3 times to accept your connection request or click ignore.

I would leave it for 3 weeks to see if they accept, if not, remove them from your connections database as a lost potential and keep a record of how many you lose. Experiment and see what works best for you.

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USING LINKEDIN FOR BUSINESS PROSPECTING SUCCESS

With more than 300 Million Unique Visits in May 2014 on the UK version of LinkedIn website alone, it is now the fifth most visited website and has steadily grown to be the largest network of business professionals on the internet with 320 million members and it shows no signs of stopping yet.

When researching your company and your products and services on the internet, people will most likely find you on LinkedIn. In fact a CEB study of more than 1,400 B2B customers across industries revealed that 57% of a typical purchase decision is now made before potential customers even talk to a supplier.

LinkedIn Social Selling Toolkit

As seasoned sales professionals you've already successful ways to promote and sell your products. You know best how to pitch your business and generate new sales, but realising the vast resource of hidden features within LinkedIn you too can create business growth using Social Selling Techniques.

Let's reveal 5 secrets used by the very few that are actively using LinkedIn and make it their preferred business development tool to accelerate their new sales lead generation.

1. Develop a LinkedIn Achievers Mind-set. Put your #BestFoot-4ward and make time to learn and use LinkedIn daily as if you would your CRM or your prospecting list.
2. Write a Number of Introductory Messages. When inviting and accepting invitations write a personalised message with your introduction and contact details. It's really important not to use this initial message to sell anything. You need to build rapport and trust, but make sure it is a proper introduction and make it clear you wish to engage further at some point in the future, giving

the recipient other areas of contact either twitter or your company page.

3. Use the LinkedIn Contacts feature to set a reminder to contact the new connection again within a week. Follow up with some engaging content that your new connection likes. Make it business related but at this point it is still better to keep it personal.
4. Activate the LinkedIn Contacts feature with the Mobile App, with either webmail service or your email software to synchronise your calendar and messages. This way you keep your messaging organised and visible. The aim is to move your new contact from LinkedIn into a more formal prospecting funnel.
5. When contacts reply the message will appear in your email software. This is your chance to reply directly from your own email software and capture their contact details for your prospecting list.

With regular (daily) sessions you will gain confidence in the system and learn how to navigate around the advanced search functionality to build lists, follow companies, and get involved in groups and giving you the opportunity to unearth a vast pool of potential new contacts that can not only become advocates for you and your company but also turn into customers.

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WHEN ONLY BEING YOU WILL DO!

When businesses join social media platforms, they all too often focus on their business instead of their customers. Why does your customer use social media? Is it to get corporate updates from you? Doubt it! Do they log on to social media to see what they can buy? Rarely! Is it to socialise with friends, gain new knowledge and be entertained? Definitely! So being more YOU and less corporate will (for most businesses) be the right approach on social media. Here's why:

Trust goes up. Trust is gained through getting to 'know' a business. I call it a business' brandonality! The personality behind the brand. For some, that brandonality is a person. It certainly is in my business. Even international businesses can have a person as their brandonality! Think of Virgin and you think of who?! And Mr Branson certainly represents the Virgin brand himself on social media.

Corporate = dull! Think about yourself as a social media user. Do you want to see corporate messages from your favourite business,

**“Would you rather talk
to a real person
or a logo?”**

or do you want to engage with them about what interests you and gain knowledge from them? Entertain and add value, rather than being 'stuffy' and disengaging! Speak to customers in a language they understand!

Look in to my eyes. So many businesses go down the route of using their logo to represent their brand on social media. If you are a small business owner, and it is you, your customers think of before they think of your logo, then you should be the face on social media. Even some of the larger businesses on social media are best represented by their CEOs. Again, put yourselves in the shoes of your customers. Would you rather talk to a real person or a logo? Would you rather follow a real person or a logo?

Engagement is key. Corporate updates are not that easy to build a conversation from! So, the more we post updates of value and interest, the more response we get! Post questions and you're asking for the response, so you'll get more of them!

It's SOCIAL media! All too often, businesses forget that big word that sits in front of media. Instead they focus on the media, and the opportunity for them to broadcast their message to the world. Being yourself and expressing your brandonality is far more social than talking 100% business! eEngage your customers.

So, it's time to be YOU! Whether that's the brandonality of your business, or even the personality of the business owner, being yourself on social media will see you gain far more interest than a corporate approach.

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SOCIAL SELLING ON LINKEDIN - A DISTINCTIVE RECIPE

Here's a cold hard truth. You can't sell your stuff on LinkedIn. Wait... what? But isn't that what I teach people to do? Yes and no. LinkedIn is about relationships and engagement – always has been, and I hope always will be. While LinkedIn can be a great lead generation machine – it's not a place to scrape unsuspecting prospects into a list they never signed up for. That's just tacky and it pisses people off. It can be a gold mine for finding and engaging with top prospects. LinkedIn has lots of cool engagement tools and my friend Joel Marans, really has his InMail Social Selling strategy down. I thought I'd share his relevant tips with you here.

First of all, I liked his breakdown of LinkedIn's communications tools:

- Use InMails to create a relationship;
- Use Connection Requests to confirm a relationship;
- Use member Messages to leverage a relationship.

Joel has proven that investing in and connecting through InMails

**“The secret sauce
is the research.”**

has resulted in at least a 3X ROI. He says that the InMail recipe is:

- A great subject line added to;
- Unique insight into the person you are connecting with;
- Something personal in the message finished with;
- A call to action next step.

Share just enough in your subject line to peak someone's interest and get him or her to open the InMail. Of course once they have done that, don't jump into your sales pitch! That's when you, having done your homework, address something they commented on in the social sites. Congratulate them on a recent win or mention how much you admire them for something (you found in a Google search) Essentially show that you have taken the time to look them up. (Without coming across as a stalker.) Briefly mention why you want to engage, and then propose a few dates to connect. Calls to action are key. Otherwise even if they feel warmly towards you, they soon forget you and then all your research, effort and dollars are for naught. Follow this simple recipe: Research + InMail + Interested Engagement + CTA = greater chance at a follow-up conversation! The secret sauce is the research. If you know enough about a person they stop feeling like a stranger and it's easier to reach out to them and engage.

Also, when you do your homework you can often find out what they care about, what their struggles are, what they need. Social Selling on LinkedIn might take a little time and a little practice and a little money, but the results and ROI / ROTI can be monumental. Give it a try. Heck – send me an InMail and let me know how you do.

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SOCIAL SELLING - LOVE IT OR HATE IT, YOU GOTTA LIKE IT

Every time you view a post on social media, you probably contemplate whether you should click the Like button or ignore it. To help you understand the hidden dynamics behind likes, I've provided a simple explanation which will help you get significant results with social selling.

Leveraging

As you begin to like and comment on others' posts, complete strangers begin to like your posts because your profile gets linked to the conversation and people begin to notice of you. When you get more likes and shares, your network expands beyond your immediate connections. The leverage you gain opens opportunities way beyond what you can get from your direct connections.

Intelligence Gathering

Everyone on LinkedIn is connected to at least five others who may be prospects. When I log in to my LinkedIn account every day I find out more about the people who like my posts or whose posts

“A lot of us on social media behave like stalkers.”

I find interesting. Who among their connections is my potential client? Which groups have they joined? Which business pages do they follow? This way I know whom to invite as a connection and it also keeps me from accepting every invitation to connect.

Knowledge

I use likes and comments on posts to build a knowledge base of topics and ideas I can use to prepare engaging content in the form of articles, videos and infographics. So when I see a particular topic generate a lot of likes or comments, I keep track of the topic and the people who like the topic. Do certain people post with a higher frequency on specific topics? Knowledge gathered in this way gives an indication of what to say and what not to say when posting comments and providing content.

Engagement

A lot of us on social media behave like stalkers. We read valuable content and only think about how we can implement the knowledge gained for free in our business. What we fail to do is acknowledge the effort made in providing us with valuable information we would otherwise take hours trawling through the internet to find. To show greater appreciation, leave a positive comment and share the post with your connections.

Strategy

Now you know what Likes are all about be sure to acknowledge the valuable content others provide and you will be amazed at how fast the quality of your engagement changes.

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SO TELL ME: WHAT IS SOCIAL SELLING, ACTUALLY?

The fact that the internet has made it so much easier to connect with other people, has resulted in major changes in the selling process over the past decade. The sales framework has changed and therefore, sales departments need to adapt, all the way from sales trainees to key account manager and VP or sales.

Social Selling, my definition. "I explain Social Selling as a combination of knowledge, technologies and not least a different way of thinking. Social selling is often a soft - not a hard - sell." A modern sales person, a social seller, is very aware of his personal brand, which deliberately signals professionalism and focuses on inspiring confidence in potential customers. He uses social media in his daily sales work as an everyday tool to help him:

- Find and create relevant content
- Monitor the online communication
- Identify buying triggers
- And generate sales leads

Social media used professionally helps the seller:

“The sales framework has changed and therefore, sales departments need to adapt.”

- Listen and understand his customer segments and competitors
- Identify and build trust with influencers
- Identify buying triggers and potential leads
- Nurture his network and stay top of mind with his customers

It's often said: Social selling isn't difficult, it's just different. I agree, but it can be a fatal mistake to believe that it's easy to implement – without proper training.

My advice to you as a sales manager. Place social selling on your strategic agenda and train your sales people thoroughly. A hardcore seller can ruin opportunities by simply transferring his "hard selling style" to social media.

My advice to you as a future social seller. Ask to be trained thoroughly – it will help you reach your goals more effectively.

Do you want to start the journey right now? Start by building your LinkedIn profile as a hub to making a positive first impression and with the purpose of building trust. You'll never know, who your next online visitor is and therefore, your primary focus when writing your profile should be your next customer, not your next employer. I quite often see LinkedIn profiles which almost scare potential clients away. Many conventional "hardcore sales people" like to brag about their wins. Unfortunately not in a valuable way to the clients, who see them as "selling machines" instead of "a person who is actually nice to do business with."

Social selling doesn't make a poor salesperson good, it makes a good one even better.

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WHO ARE YOU ONLINE IS WHO YOU ARE

If you think social selling is the new magic fairy dust that will turn you into the next sales superstar you are in for a rude awakening. Social selling is an important part of sales but it takes much more to move today's savvy buyers to take action.

Here is the real truth about social selling: Buyers don't care about your presence on social media site, they care about your ability to solve their problems. They buy YOU and from YOU because they have trust that YOU will deliver solutions to their business problems and that YOU will be there to back those solutions up.

Trust is a foundation built one brick at a time. Everything from how quickly you return calls, your product knowledge, what you say and how you say it, to what they read about you on social media sites influences a potential buyer's perception of you and your ability to deliver on your promises.

Social selling, however, is a core part of building trust and savvy salespeople are asking this question: "Does my presence online

“Customers care about getting their problems solved.”

support my efforts to build my reputation as a professional who solves problems and can be trusted?" This is the point that most sales professionals miss when engaging in social selling activities. They wrongly assume that there should always be a direct, measurable result from these activities. But, it just doesn't

work this way because, as I said earlier, customers care about getting their problems solved. Your professional presence online simply positions you as the one person who is most capable of bringing solutions to the table. This positioning plays a key role in getting people to engage with you and buy YOU. What is critically important to grasp is because the environment is virtual, you have zero chance of changing first impressions that are made about you online. When potential customers view the "online you" and don't like what they see, they just move on.

Today, not tomorrow, take action to ensure that your online image casts YOU in the best light. Ensure that you have professional looking headshots on all your profiles. Ensure that your profiles are complete, truthful and tell your story well. Ensure that you have a consistent profile message on all major social networks.

Top sales professionals understand how important it is to make a great impression online and in-person. They schedule time to manage their online presence and always think twice before posting something that could damage their reputation. With this in mind, as you review all of your online profiles, answer this question: "Based on what you see and read, would you BUY YOU?"

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SURROUND YOUR BUYERS WITH SOCIAL PROOF

The essence of social selling is not new; it is the same old “peer in the boardroom, not vendor in the hallway” strategy that is standard for every B2B sales team. The game, however, is being played in a digital age across the social web where the time it takes your prospects to obtain information from their peers, the people they trust most, is rapidly trending to zero.

There is too much talk, however, about social selling that discloses how to stalk your prey. Hide behind your computer and find out everything you can about your prospect. If that is how you approach social selling, you are missing out on the magic behind this opportunity. Your buyer is smart, knowledgeable and doesn't want to talk to you...unless you can give her confidence that you are going to help facilitate an educated buying process. The opportunity that presents itself in this era of social selling is the ability to surround your prospects with the right peers and the right information to help them make an informed decision.

Be a thought leader. Be knowledgeable about your industry and

“Surround your prospects with the right peers and the right information.”

share the good stuff. Read and share a wide range of great content, not just the information you or your company produces. Elevate your profile and be seen as someone with whom your prospects want to speak about a number of diverse and engaging topics – not just someone who can sell their product or service.

Don't forget, it is not all about you! By sharing and contributing to content from other sources, it helps build credibility, gives credit to those who deserve it, and builds your network.

Leverage social media to be a more effective networker. Connect your buyers to people who are similar to them; or, introduce them to groups, discussions and centers of excellence that can guide them through their buyer's journey. Suggest a LinkedIn group or online community about which they might not know. Or, perhaps point them to an online discussion among peers in the same evaluation process.

Mobilize advocates to surround buyers with social proof. This can be done by making sure you have recent and relevant reviews for your buyers to educate themselves. By encouraging your current customers to enter conversations with your future customers, you will build a community of trust around your company and your products.

The best sales experiences have always involved meaningful relationships that guide a natural buying process. Buyers and sellers now mobilize their networks, making the sales process more authentic by connecting prospects with peers.

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WIN NEW BUSINESS WITH GREAT CONTENT ON LINKEDIN

After attending my LinkedIn seminar Richard Snow, the New Zealand Franchisor of Nanotek loved what he had learned and asked me to optimise his LinkedIn profile to help him grow his business. Nanotek are a high quality waterless car valet service and I created Richard's profile to speak to his ideal customers in the automotive industry including motor vehicle dealerships, fleet and lease companies, and small and large fleets. Since then After growing his good quality automotive connections from 0 to 727, he started sharing updates every couple of weeks. As a result of both his number of quality connections and his updates he has won new business.

What type of content does Richard share? In one update Richard shared the fact that Nanotek had achieved 50 consecutive positive reviews on Trademe, New Zealand's biggest and most popular classifieds site. As a result of this update being seen by decision makers responsible for fleet vehicles Nanotek has won the following two new contracts:

“He is more than happy to be leaving cold calling behind him.”

1. The HR Manager of New Zealand's Vodafone Warriors professional rugby league team saw his update and then invited Richard to provide a valet service for one vehicle as a test of the service. After providing a great Nanotek valet service he went on to secure the opportunity to regularly maintain all of their fleet.

2. A member of the marketing team at Honda New Zealand saw this same update and invited Richard to provide the Nanotek valet service on an ongoing basis for their new vehicle launches and vehicles required for media reviews.

Richard is very happy that he profile is working for him while he is busy looking after his customers and his franchisees.

I work with a variety of professionals, sales professionals and business owners in the B2B space and what I love about Richard's successful use of social selling is that it proves that LinkedIn is the perfect place to find your ideal clients for a wide range of businesses.

Richard shares updates that are of value and interest to his target market and he is reaping the rewards. As a result he has become a great advocate of social selling and a raving fan of LinkedIn. This is a business man who has years of experience in cold calling and after learning how is now is excited to be creating warm connections and new business via LinkedIn. He is more than happy to be leaving cold calling behind him. Richard's example shows the power of sharing great content for lead generation and business growth.

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IS YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION “SOCIALIZED?”

The opportunities to engage in social media conversation are numerous – but the “in-the-moment” aspect of it sometimes can have a negative impact on the consistency of your message. You need to be sure that your social media supports and integrates with the overall message and positioning that you have built for your business, product or service. Otherwise it has the potential to dilute your message, and not contribute positively to your brand.

First off, develop a topic list that provides key content areas that both connect to and surround your offerings. These are the topics that you want to comment on, and help you to identify where you want to play these messages. It serves to address the “randomization” that may plague your social media efforts. Instead of trying to be everywhere, you can research, map out and plan your coverage of topics across the relevant sites, groups, conversations and destinations where your target audience spends their time. With this list, you also have a framework that helps you balance coverage across topics – so you’re aren’t just focused on some, and miss others.

Then with your topical list in hand, it’s time to figure out how your value proposition (be it personal, corporate, product or service), figures into your social media plan.

Using your value proposition as a guide to developing your social media strategy can give you a messaging framework for your social communications. This can help you net out the right content, and engagement techniques to deliver value and be part of the right conversations. You want to consider how every post, tweet, and piece of content that you use on your social media platforms connects to the value proposition(s).

Does it integrate, communicate the key points in your value propositions? If it doesn’t connect in a definable way, ask yourself: is this piece of content adding something useful to the conversation, or is it diluting it?

Create a grid so you can map each piece of content (list titles on vertical access) against the following factors (horizontal access).

1. Vertical Axis: Titles of content assets
2. Horizontal Axis:
 - Topics (list each individually)
 - Audiences (list each important audience member or group)
 - Value proposition (list each one individually)

With this grid, you can plan the emphasis of each piece of social content – lining up what the messaging arc will be quarter by quarter.

Or if a new opportunity comes up that you want to take advantage of, do a quick check of the grid to see where it fits, or IF it fits. Sometimes being able to disqualify something is just as valuable. Connecting the value proposition across your social content literally “socializes” this core message and provides both higher recognition and engagement impact of the value proposition that you are driving in your marketplace.

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NO KISSING ON THE FIRST DATE!

Some of you may laugh at the title of this but take note: when it comes to selling, most sales people are trying to kiss on the first date! They're trying to release their pent up sales pitches on the very first prospect they can find without getting to know anything about them. However noble our intentions are, it's time to realize that the way we are selling has to change. The change that is now required isn't something we're doing voluntarily, but something that is now being forced of us. Why? Because our buyer has fundamentally changed.

Access to information

Because of the internet and social media, buyers are now able to get a significant amount of information that was previously your best kept secret. The information you once guarded like a hawk is now (mostly) freely available on the internet.

Too add to this crazy mess, buyers can actually now talk to each other. Gasp! They can share insights, opinions, experiences, whitepapers, evaluation guides, etc. I have an IT Director friend

“The consequences of inaction can be devastating.”

who is talking to 6 people on social media that are all about to embark on a similar journey with the same vendors. They're all from different parts of the world and are comparing notes on these vendors. Although this was possible before, social media has put fuel on this communications fire!

And this is causing havoc...right down to where it hurts the most: your wallet. Because buyers are increasingly likely to start their research online, those that are able to add value FIRST have a greater likelihood of winning the deal. So even the most brilliant sales people, without the right tools and knowledge, may get left out in the cold. Are we prepared for this new reality? Most aren't.

Business as usual

What are most sales leaders doing about this? The answer is nothing. Now I don't really want to paint a picture of being unfair here. While I think sales leaders may generally be aware of the impact of social media and the internet in sales, they don't know where to start. The consequences of inaction can be devastating; whether they're predicated on a lack of understand or outright refusal to acknowledge the new reality.

The bottom line

Sometimes we all need a good kick in the pants to wake us up. In our world of sales, I believe that the buyer journey will force us to adapt. As with all things, the change can seem a little bit daunting and scary. I'm here to tell you that social selling isn't difficult, it's just different. No kissing on the first date: let's get to know our prospects better first!

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I WOULDN'T KNOW SOCIAL SELLING IF IT HIT ME OVER THE HEAD

And that's a problem. Why? Because Social Selling isn't just a hot buzzword that the cool Marketing kids are throwing around today. Social Selling goes far beyond the idea of sparking the sales process with social outlets such as Twitter or LinkedIn. Social Selling even goes beyond the idea of being a 'fad'. If we think about the evolution of communication channels going back to print, to radio, to TV, to email, to web, to social ...not a single 'fad'. Did email go away? No. Did the web blow over? Nope. So guess what? Social Selling won't either.

Before I tell you the what or even the how of Social Selling, I will give you the ever-important#why. Why should you, Mr. CMO, and you, Ms. Sales Leader, take interest in learning the how-to's of Social Selling? Because the proof is in the pudding. It is now proven that those sales representatives who are actively incorporating social networks and media are outperforming their peers and not just by a little. In 2012, 78% of sales people using social media as part of their sales process outperformed their sales peers. Again, why? Because the buying process has evolved.

“Build your personal brand is the first step to becoming a social seller.”

Today, customers have access to more information via Search and Social, than ever before, therefore delaying the need to engage with a salesperson. That's where social selling comes in: helping social buyers become customers. Building your personal brand

is the first step to becoming a Social Seller. Before your reps go out and start connecting socially with potential customers, they need to optimize their online presence for the buyer, not the recruiter.

People buy from people they know, like and trust; no one likes or trusts the “Quota Crusher.” The way you engage with buyers today is no longer all about “Mmm, gonna go get me some prospects!” It's about creating future advocates by socially surrounding the buyer, the buying community, and their sphere of influence. The modern sales professional uses content as her currency - content that educates and adds value to the buyer.

Your salespeople, like the customer's buying journey itself, MUST EVOLVE. Why? Because Social Selling calls for storytellers, taking your expertise, passion, knowledge, and insight and turning that into answers to customers' questions. It's about using the data and information available via the web to create deeper relationships with your customers. Get relationships, get insight, get data. Simple, right? Maybe not, but don't worry - I think we all remember the days of shuffling through stacks of printed emails as we scribbled our replies back for our assistants to later type out. Now look at us, firing out emails on smartphones before our first sips of coffee. We've evolved! Shouldn't your Social Sales plan evolve as well?

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“DINOSAURS”

Today, technology is moving so quickly that even “digital natives” who grew up with it have a tough time keeping pace. Although our capacity to consume or digest information is the same as it was 50 or 500 years ago, of concern is the sheer quantity of information and content that is coming at a pace greater than we’ve ever faced before.

Too many professionals, “Social Media” has a negative connotation associated with it. Facebook. Twitter. Waste of time. There may be some truth to those perceptions but there is also the opportunity to drive actual return-on-investment business results and not just “Likes” or “Followers”. An opportunity to become more efficient in terms of productivity exists by leveraging digital and social media and the ability to develop stronger relationships with clients and constituents can be dramatically accelerated.

I’ve personally witnessed senior executives learn and embrace digital and social media platforms. For all the opportunity that

“There must be real engagement from CEO’s, Founders and Senior Executives.”

exists, there must be real engagement from CEO’s, Founders and Senior Executives to understand how digital, social media and mobile can work together to drive their businesses and industries forward. This key group is only going to embrace and adopt digital and social media platforms when others show them

the real value. That doesn’t mean emailing a bunch of slides, sharing the latest infographic and unsourced digital statistics someone shares on Twitter. It means showing this very intelligent group of leaders how their business can directly benefit from these platforms.

We’re all capable of doing a better job of teaching others with humility. It means not sneering at someone because they don’t know what a “Hashtag” is or don’t even have their own Tumblr account! It means listening first and asking senior executives and business leaders the right questions so that we can then teach them what really matters and the businesses they lead. In the process of listening, we might just learn a few things from them.

It also means starting small and not forcing a person to adopt all social media platforms at once. Why should someone get on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Vine all at once? Start with one they are open to using and then build from there when they see the ROI (Return on Investment) for themselves.

Someone much wiser than me once told me that being called a “Dinosaur” isn’t negative. A dinosaur has history and can give clues of what not to do if one can pursue it with an open mind. History does repeat itself and that isn’t always good. Dinosaurs tell that story.

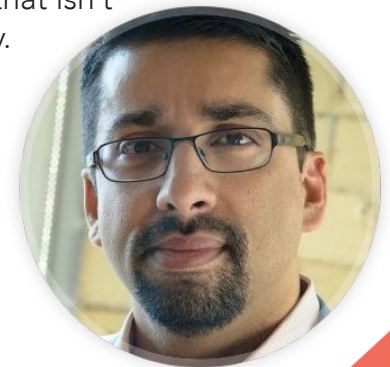
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THE SOCIAL SALES TRIFECTA

In working with hundreds of B2B sales reps we have found one recipe for success with a broad range of companies when it comes to gaining visibility and growing revenues. We find that when done regularly, leads to increased sales. Just because this works for many sellers in my world it doesn't guarantee it will work for you but it does make sense to consider trying this strategy out if you are also a business selling to other businesses because it does work broadly. Here's a simple overview.

Content

Come up with a plan for creating content that helps the customers and future customers of your business. A great way to start is to create a list of questions that prospective buyers always ask. Chances are if they have been asked before, they will be asked again. Create blog posts to post on a company blog that answer the most common 20 questions that buyers have asked you or others at your company. Voila – you now have 20 pieces of content that new buyers searching for answers may find from you.

“Talk about the world your buyer lives in.”

LinkedIn

When you create new content on your company blog, build up some distribution channels for the great answers you've been addressing for those seeking products and services in your industry. Talk about the world your buyer lives in. When created,

share it through LinkedIn in a couple of places – as an “update” – share a couple sentences about the content and then give the link for others to click on. You can also share on your profile as an attachment, or within a group where your buyers tend to be. Don't just share your stuff, share other content that helps those in your buyer's world. If you can add value to others – especially your buyers and existing customers, they will learn that you're someone who is a leader in your industry and are someone they should reach out to when they need something or have questions.

Twitter

For some reason, Twitter catches some of the business professionals we don't run into through LinkedIn or G+. We do suggest re-tweeting the same content multiple times spread out over multiple days because of the short shelf life of a tweet. Maybe it is because people monitor lists, companies, and individuals, or maybe we are just lucky – but consistently new connections reach out to us and our clients via Twitter. Many of the “reaches” turn into conversations that turn into new business.

Consider this a prospecting strategy and put requisite time toward it or hire journalism majors and former business writers to help create content of interest. Give it a try, and let me know how it works for you.

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SELLING SOCIAL SELLING TO THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

Is your management team wary of social selling? Try using research, metrics and data along with storytelling to change your executive team's perception of social selling from time-waster to revenue-generator.

1. Reference the success of known brands

Small and large companies including IBM, ADP, EMC, Oracle, SAP and Microsoft have reported measurable results from their social initiatives and shared their stories in conference presentations.

2. Point to relevant industry surveys

IBM surveyed over 1,000 global buyers and found that 1/3 have already used social media to engage with their vendors. Furthermore, they discovered that 75% of their buyers are likely to use social media in the purchase process in the future.

3. Track opportunities generated or nurtured via social

Ensure your sales team is capturing Twitter, LinkedIn or other social media as the lead source or communications medium.

like response times and conversion rates with and without social, you will have the attention of the executive suite.

It's time for executives to face reality. You can help prove that prospects are using social media to educate themselves, connect with sellers and make buying decisions with success stories, industry data, and – best of all - your own sales metrics such as those mentioned earlier. Leading companies are figuring out how to appropriately use, track and measure their social selling initiatives and incorporate them into already-existing processes used in their sales organizations.

What case studies, research and sales cycle metrics are YOU using to internally sell social selling? Can you tie social selling to qualified opportunities? Faster sales cycles? Bigger customer orders? Revenue?

**“It's time for
executives to face
reality.”**

Track these leads through the marketing, sales and renewal cycles along with meaningful metrics that correlate to revenue and other company goals. When you can make a connection between your team's social activities (e.g. listening, outreach) and key indicators

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SOCIAL SELLING: LEARN HOW TO BE SOCIAL, YOU ALREADY KNOW HOW TO SELL

The more people think about change, disruption, learning new skills and anything that requires them to get outside their comfort zone the more hesitate and skeptical they will be.

Great salespeople know how to sell but the key is understanding when and how you sell with people you are engaging, meeting or connected too on social. These 4 steps will help you do that:

1. Listen

Do you know what social networks your target community is on? No probably not and that is ok because creating accounts on social are free and the most powerful element of social media is you have the amazing ability to pull data just by listening. Create a list of common terms, your competitors and hashtags you believe your community would use in conversations. When you search on these elements you will see who is talking about what you care

about, where they are talking and then you can follow them and prioritize your time for the social networks where your community

**“Remember that attention
and trust are hard
to gain.”**

is engaging.

2. Promote

Nobody likes a kiss ass but on social the idea of promoting others and self promotion are often the difference between gaining

followers and people unfollowing you. Rather than only promoting your content and your ideas find people who have a similar thinking as you. By promoting something they posted that aligns with your thinking you will increase the chance of them doing the same to you while also attracting their followers to your account.

3. Show you care

It's important to remember that attention & trust are hard to gain so take the time to do your research and customize your engagement. Google their name, look and see what their recent activity on social was and personalize the messaging showing you took the time to get to know them so you hope they take the time to listen to you.

4. Create conversations not communication

Rather than asking how are you or just saying thank you, create a conversation by asking “I saw you were at that event last week how did it go?” You will create dialogue and then its just doing what you do best!

So before you say you don't do social media or selling on social is for you, try using social media and doing these 4 steps and you'll be amazed that the sell on social just like on the golf course will be the easiest part!

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SOCIAL SELLING OR SOCIAL SERVICE?

I recently asked a gathering of sales professionals what was the one major change they were seeing in buyer behavior their unanimous answer was that the demand for instantaneous support and service had increased dramatically. The interesting part of this equation is that the expectation of instant service did not just happen post-sale but was happening more and more in the pre-sales cycle. It appears that prospects want to be treated more like they are already customers and want to test things more, gather more information than ever and have any issues resolved yesterday.

Our on-demand, socially-enabled world with its ability to provide instant gratification by the nanosecond is reorienting our expectations of each other. This is putting an immense amount of pressure on sales and support people, but what to do?

1. Pre-empt. Leverage the tribal knowledge in your organization and try to capture as many data points from all the different functions about what prospects are looking for during the sales cycle in terms of information, sample contract terms, demos, access to product etc. and make sure you are as prepared as possible to be able to supply this quickly and easily.

2. Align. Make sure you spend time with the prospect and understand their expectations of response times, and service and support follow-up. The more you can work with them to categorize and segment the different kinds of needs they will have in terms of urgency the better your organization can respond appropriately. If the customer knows that something they mark or refer to as "Urgent" will get your immediate attention whereas something they mark or refer to as "Important but not urgent" will take a day or two (or whatever timeframe you mutually agreed) their confidence in your organization will naturally increase.

3. Accept. The other important component is to accept that this is the world we live in and look at how you can configure your organization and its work practices to meet these increased expectations of instantaneous service. This may mean that even small businesses or those with limited resources need to look at having people on call in the evenings or weekends to respond not just to customers but prospects too. The beauty of technology is, of course, that this does not necessarily require them sitting at desk as long as they have the mobile tools and access to respond from wherever they happen to be. It also means that sales people need to over-communicate their whereabouts to prospects/customers so if they are out of pocket during a weekend or evening the prospect/customer already knows this and doesn't expect immediate response.

Again the reality (excuse my overuse of the word but I try to only deal with realities!) is that technology is continually evolving our response expectations and we in turn are projecting these expectations onto everyone we come into contact with whether in business or our personal lives. And so our business practices need to adapt to this evolution.

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TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO BE DOING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Want to maximize the power of social media to boost your sales? Here are eight activities you should be doing regularly.

- 1. Highlighting promotions.** Having a sale? A special offer? An event on any kind? Publicize it on every social media channel.
- 2. Educating your buyers.** What information do you have that can help your prospects and customers be better buyers? Or better users of your products? Or simply better at something in their lives or jobs?
- 3. Announcing new products.** Announce new products (or services) on social media to build buzz. You can even test market new products by making them available to your followers before anyone else.
- 4. Monitoring customer experiences.** Ever wish you could eavesdrop on your customers to learn what they're really saying about you? You can! According to recent studies, 39% of people

“It’s time for executives to face reality.”

on Twitter have tweeted about a brand and 42% of Facebook users have mentioned a brand in a status update.

5. Resolving customer problems. Often, when your customers have a problem with your product or service, they won't bother to tell you. But they will tell thousands of people online. This is actually an opportunity, because it gives you the chance to resolve your customer's problem. And because you're doing it in public, others can see your response, building trust.

6. Encouraging evangelists. Are you responding to the social activity of your most vocal supporters? If you ignore them, they'll talk about you less. If you publicly thank and praise them, they'll talk about you even more. To reward and encourage your evangelists further, give them discounts, bonuses and upgrades.

7. Researching competitors. Want to know what your competitors are doing? Follow their social media pages. Want to know what their customers think of them? Monitor Facebook and Twitter for mentions of their names and look them up on review sites for competitive intelligence you can't get anywhere else.

8. Asking questions. Social media isn't just about broadcasting. It's about dialogue. Asking questions of your customers and prospects causes them to feel more emotionally connected to you, strengthening brand loyalty. It's also an efficient way to gain valuable ideas and feedback about your products and services.

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