



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SOCIAL SELLING

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Social selling has been a top sales buzzword in recent years. But is that all it is?

Social selling is no passing trend, and it's not just a synonym for social media. It's about more than connecting with prospects over LinkedIn or Twitter.

But enough about what it isn't. Social selling refers to developing, nurturing, and leveraging relationships in a digital environment.

It involves sharing relevant content, interacting directly with potential buyers and customers, personal branding, and social listening and surrounding. When done successfully, it dramatically boosts your bottom line.

75%

of B2B buyers now use social media to research vendors
(IDC)

57%

of the buying journey is done before a sales rep is involved
(CEB)

54%

of people are now involved in the average B2B buying decision
(CSO Insights)

90%

of decision makers say they never respond to cold outreach
(Harvard Business Review)

74%

of buyers choose the sales rep who was first to add value and insight
(Corporate Visions)

28%

of those cold called engage in conversations
(Keller Research Center)

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WHAT IS SOCIAL SELLING?

You've heard the term before. But what exactly is social selling?

Social selling is the process of developing, nurturing, and leveraging relationships online to sell products or services. It encompasses more than just social media sites—it's a broader strategy that includes sharing relevant content with leads and prospects online, interacting directly with potential buyers and customers, personal branding, and social listening and surrounding.

There tends to be a lot of confusion about social selling. The term first arose in 2012 and has since exploded in the marketplace. While many people equate social selling with networks like LinkedIn and Twitter, it encompasses a much larger strategy.

In order to be successful, social selling must incorporate other platforms as well as strategies for marketing alignment, CRM integration, and measurement.

To truly understand what it is, we first have to take a step back and consider how today's sales teams have evolved.

THE MODERN BUYING JOURNEY

The **modern buyer** is radically different than 10 years ago. Businesses around the world have already forever changed because buyers have changed. Buyers are arming themselves with more information than ever before to make informed decisions.

They can now connect with their peers on social platforms such as LinkedIn and Twitter to learn about the challenges, pitfalls, and successes of any solution implementation.

Today, buyers purchase clothes and electronics, and learn about their future vehicles online. What makes you think they don't also research software, HR best practices, insurance, or corporate healthcare policies online?

Social selling is about meeting the buyer where they're already conducting due diligence—online.

In today's digital era, consumers are in charge of the buyer's journey. They're demanding that you **embrace the digital transformation**. Old-school sales tactics like cold calling, broadcasting ads, and hard sales don't work anymore. Sophisticated sales pros are no longer taught to pressure buyers or use these questionable selling methods.

To sell to today's modern buyers, sales leaders must take a buyer-centric approach.

“Businesses around the world have already forever changed because buyers have changed.”



A MULTI-THREADED APPROACH

Social selling involves these **three major tactical components**:

TRIGGER-BASED SELLING

Trigger-based selling is a great top-of-the-funnel initiative. It refers to the internal or external events happening around your buyer. Sales professionals can be alerted to this digital information in real time, allowing for highly contextual conversations. This type of selling is great for lead generation and can open doors for you based on previous relationships.

INSIGHTS-BASED SELLING

Insights-based selling is a middle-of-the-funnel technique. It refers to the process of shaping your buyer's journey early on with digital insights. Sales professionals can send buyers information that will help them do their due diligence and make informed decisions. In doing so, sales people help buyers better navigate their buying journey.

REFERRAL-BASED SELLING

Referral-based selling works best as a bottom-of-the-funnel sales tactic. It involves leveraging relationships for selling purposes. At this stage, buyers are considering which vendor to select, looking for someone with a track record of solving a particular problem. Sales professionals can introduce prospects to past customers and share relevant success stories to help them along their journey.

THIS IS NOT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING!

Social media marketing and social selling are terms that are sometimes confused. Both are mechanisms for driving revenue, and each term represents a different stage in building a stronger buyer relationship.

Understanding the importance of technology is key for both social selling and social media marketing. They both use social media listening technology and seek to support buyers during the research stage.

Social media marketing is one branch of a larger content marketing strategy. It delivers the right content to the right people at the right time. But to ensure your prospect buys from you—and not from your competitors—you also need social selling.

Implementing **social selling** helps you establish relationships. Connecting through social networks like LinkedIn is just one aspect of social selling. It also involves targeted content marketing, in-person or video meetings with prospects, and personal branding.

Social selling is about identifying the right people within a buying committee and engaging with them. It involves building and nurturing meaningful relationships, adding value, connecting, and listening to potential buyers.

To successfully implement social selling, sales leaders need to fully integrate it into their sales process and have a strategy and daily routine in place. Doing so helps sales leaders identify new business opportunities and decision makers.

Did you know that social selling is part of a greater entity called digital selling?

“Social selling involves building and nurturing meaningful relationships, adding value, connecting, and listening to potential buyers.”

WHAT IS DIGITAL SELLING?

Simply put, **digital selling** involves leveraging digital assets. Social selling is about using social platforms as a means of driving business. Digital selling, however, is about creating an entire ecosystem that leverages all assets (not just social assets) occurring both online and offline. It includes activities like sales automation, online presentations, digital documents, CRM operations, and more.

Digital selling doesn't just involve one department. Your sales and marketing teams simply can't work in silos. To build a successful digital selling program, sales and marketing must be aligned and working together.

Digital selling involves creating an organizational structure around content, and an ecosystem to measure how your customers consume your content. Everyone in your company needs to be involved in creating, organizing, and distributing content.



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WHY YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS TO ADOPT SOCIAL SELLING

You now understand the basics of social selling. But you may still be wondering if this tactic is right for you. What if your buyers aren't online? Is there any point in adopting social selling?

Let's consider some data that makes a compelling case for all sales organizations to adopt social selling.

- 74% of business buyers conduct more than half of their research online before making a purchase decision
- 84% of CEOs and VPs use social media to make purchasing decisions
- 78% of sales pros using social media perform better than their peers

The fact is your buyers are already learning without you. They've already started conducting research well before you even think about providing them with value.

To stay relevant, you must be able to positively impact your buyer's experience. If you don't take an active role in educating your prospects with the right insights, content, and information, your buyers will simply go elsewhere.

Will you let your competitors educate your potential buyers?

TOP 3 REASONS COMPANIES INVEST IN SOCIAL SELLING

1. Increase pipeline development
2. Reduce account churn
3. Improve talent recruitment and development

INDUSTRIES THAT HAVE ALREADY ADOPTED SOCIAL SELLING

A few standout industries that have emerged as innovators in the past few years include:

- Consulting/Professional Services
- Information Technology
- Telecommunications and Software

Why are these industries in particular adopting social selling? Because most technology companies are quite progressive, as are their buyers.

In more recent years, however, the following industries have also begun to adopt social selling:

- Financial Services
- Manufacturing
- Healthcare/Medical Technology

Why exactly are they adopting social selling? What's driving the change in these industries?

To answer these questions, let's dive in a little deeper. By understanding why these industries are choosing to adopt social selling, you'll be better able to grasp the need to implement it in your organization.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

More and more B2B buyers are going online to conduct their research, engage on social, and conduct their due diligence on companies. And a growing number of financial services professionals are already on social.

The reality is if you work in this sector, your ideal buyers are online and looking for solutions.

Sales leaders must consider how to find those prospects, engage them, educate them, and continually develop their networks. While the financial services industry is traditionally risk averse and not as likely as technology companies to implement progressive methods, there's been a shift in mindset around social media in the industry.

Financial institutions are gradually warming up to the opportunity social media presents to secure new clients, engage more effectively, and build ongoing relationships with prospects.

“More and more B2B buyers are going online to conduct their research, engage on social, and conduct their due diligence on companies.”

“To sell to B2B buyers, you need to effectively engage them, demonstrate your expertise, and build relationships.”

MANUFACTURING

Many companies in the manufacturing industry have been slow to adopt social selling. They assume it's not for them as their buyers may not even be online.

Social selling, however, goes beyond just LinkedIn and Twitter. To sell to B2B buyers, you need to effectively engage them, demonstrate your expertise, and build relationships.

While the process has been slow, data from LinkedIn demonstrates the cumulative Social Selling Index Growth in Manufacturing/Industrial has **grown 2.3 times** from 2012 to 2016.

To get started with social selling, sales leaders in the manufacturing industry can share industry knowledge through social to establish credibility. They can distinguish themselves from the competition by building their brands online. By leveraging LinkedIn and other social platforms, they can find insights on specific customers and better engage them.

HEALTHCARE

The lack of discussion around social selling in the healthcare industry can be traced to the confusion between social media marketing and social selling.

Identifying the right buyers for your medical device or solution is especially difficult. Your products are complex, thus creating a complex sales cycle. For these reasons, social selling is an ideal solution.

To successfully implement social selling in this industry, ensure your sales team is enabled and educated about what it means to provide value, be helpful, and network through social media.

You have the opportunity to collaborate with your prospects, understand their challenges, and help them find the right solution. Implementing social selling can position you as an industry expert and guiding resource.

“Implementing social selling can position you as an industry expert and guiding resource.”

“Several industries see more than 50% of revenue by social selling.”

SOCIAL SELLING: A SOLUTION FOR ALL INDUSTRIES

Social selling is critical in nearly all industries. In fact, several industries see more than **50% of revenue by social selling**.

Adapting to change is crucial in sales. If your company hasn't adopted social selling yet, now is the time.

It's important to remember, though, that social selling is a long-term strategy. While you won't see the results overnight, your company will benefit in the long run.

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HOW CAN YOU INTEGRATE SOCIAL SELLING INTO YOUR SALES PROCESS?

To successfully adopt social selling, you need to integrate it into your current sales process. Follow these expert tips to find out how:

GET LEADERSHIP BUY-IN

Leadership buy-in is the first and most important element to social selling success. The executive team needs to truly believe that social selling will positively impact the business.

You also need triple-alignment to successfully implement social selling. This means the sales, marketing, and sales enablement leaders must all work together. If any one of these parties isn't involved, your social selling program will fall through.

“Leadership buy-in is the first and most important element to social selling success.”

SALES LEADERSHIP

Direct sales leaders must create accountability with the sales professionals. After all, sales reps report to this department—not marketing or sales enablement. Sales leaders should ensure sales professionals implement social selling into their daily cadence through one-on-one meetings and constant coaching. They should examine learning behaviour and translate it into sales outcomes.

Most importantly, sales leaders must demonstrate they believe in social selling through their own actions.

MARKETING LEADERSHIP

Marketing is the engine of the social selling machine. This department is involved in creating, organizing, distributing, and measuring the engagement of all digital assets. To ensure revenue generation, they should align their objectives with the sales department.

Sales professionals rely on the marketing team to create content they can share with prospects that will provide real value.

SALES ENABLEMENT

Sales enablement helps connect the sales and marketing teams. They find the people, processes, and technology to ensure social selling can be fully integrated into their current sales processes.

Without enablement, there's no long-term behavioural strategy that will ensure a sustainable cultural shift.

Remember that social selling success is a team sport, not a showcase for great individual contributions. Teamwork in your organization is always going to outperform what you can accomplish individually in a vacuum.

CREATE A DIGITAL SELLING DEPARTMENT

Another important step is to create a department that concentrates on creating content and research, working alongside sales professionals to help them in their territory.

Include a content marketer, sales development representative, and sales executive in your digital selling environment. Together, they will act as one business unit within the larger organization.

Rather than marketing on a massive scale, they focus on creating specific content for a specific audience. Together, the digital selling team measures your buyer's digital footprints and monitor buyers' content consumption.

MAKE IT A SALES-LED INITIATIVE

To be successful, a sales executive should take the lead with social selling. If marketing, sales operations, or sales enablement leaders champion the social selling program on their own, they'll be sure to fail.

Instead, the sales leader should be responsible for helping ensure sales professionals acquire new sales skills that translate into sales outcomes. A tactical sales leader at the Regional VP or SVP level will drive accountability and bring awareness to the leadership team, the board, and advisors.

When the highest echelons of leadership communicate a clear and strong vision, sales professionals will grasp the importance of social selling.

Plus, sales professionals will emulate you since they assume your actions are a reflection of what made you so successful. You, as a sales leader, are under the microscope of tens, hundreds, or thousands of sales professionals each day. If you're social, they'll become social.

“To be successful, a sales executive should take the lead with social selling.”

SET GOALS AROUND SALES ACTIVITIES

Sales leaders can spend ample time preparing their teams for social selling. But if you can't measure your sales activities, you won't know if your efforts are successful.

Set reasonable, yet challenging targets around the following:

- Appointments
- Opportunities
- Messages sent
- Content shared
- LinkedIn Social Selling Index (SSI) Score

To ensure all departments are working towards the same goals, get sales, marketing, and sales enablement leaders to define what success looks like for them. You can first craft a common goal, then create more tactical goals for each individual department.

Make sure to set a defined timeline, quantifiable for your goals. To figure out how to achieve—and exceed—your targets, reverse engineer your goals. Figure out what you need to do every day, week, and month to get where you need to be.

What behaviours do you need to train towards? What kind of program would be required to teach the type of activities that would achieve your goals?

PUT IT IN YOUR CALENDAR

Sales leaders should schedule 30-60 minutes per day for social selling on each sales professional's calendar. During this time, sales reps should have a set of repeatable tasks they can execute that are tied to sales results.

While some sales leaders may view scheduling time for social selling as unnecessary, it's in fact crucial. Why? Once it's part of sales professionals' routines, social selling activities will be nearly impossible for them to give up. Upon seeing the results of their efforts, they'll be driven to continue. All it takes is a little time every day.

IMPLEMENT SALES COACHING

An important way to drive accountability is to manage and **coach social selling** in your one-on-ones. With successful one-on-one coaching, you get the results that you measure and coach toward. If you don't explore your sales team's social activity as part of your one-on-ones, how can you expect social activity to happen?

If you're constantly reinforcing elements of social selling to go deeper and wider into accounts, expect that social will become part of their daily cadence.

FOLLOW THESE STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL COACHING:

Learn First

Before your sales professionals learn a new social selling action, you should learn the action first.

Contextualization

You then contextualize the action for the sales team (why it's important, how it works within your sales process, what value it will provide).

Reinforcement

Later, reinforce that same social selling action at each one-on-one meeting until you feel each sales professional has incorporated this action into his or her sales DNA.

Build Habits

Once the previous action has become habitual, layer on a new social selling action into a sales professional's daily cadence.



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WHO CAN HELP YOU GET STARTED WITH SOCIAL SELLING?

Social selling is constantly evolving with new technology. To get started with social selling, sales leaders and reps alike need to unlearn questionable sales tactics and break old habits.

This takes training—to adapt to today's digital era, sales professionals need to be educated on the new methodology and tools.

Unfortunately, *75% of training programs fail to deliver results*. Many of these programs provide one-day workshops or short sessions with no ongoing support. Since *70% of people forget* what was taught within 24 hours of the training experience, these training sprints don't provide real results.

While workshops are great for generating initial excitement, they're terrible for creating behavioural change. Don't let scaling social selling throughout your organization be an excuse to shortcut training into workshops. Only use a workshop as a component of the overall learning experience.

To be successful, a training program requires:

- Accountability
- Measurement
- Buy-in from leaders

Without these factors, your training efforts are bound to fail.

“The most successful companies see social selling as one piece of their larger digital selling organization.”

Does that mean investing in social selling training isn't worthwhile?

Social selling training is crucial. But if you don't do it right, you may as well not do it at all. The most successful companies see social selling as one piece of their larger digital selling organization. Adapting to today's digital era and transforming your organization takes time, education, practice, and discipline.

A sales training company that takes a holistic approach to digital and social selling training will help you get started and ensure your long-term success.

HOW A SALES TRAINING COMPANY CAN HELP

LEARN THE VALUE OF SOCIAL SELLING

If sales leaders don't understand the value of social, how will sales reps learn it?

Executive buy-in is critical for social selling success. It's necessary for reinforcement and support, which then trickles down throughout the entire salesforce. A sales training company should help you convince your sales professionals why social selling works and how it will benefit them.

TRAIN ALL LEVELS

Don't assume all sales leaders know what they're doing. Providing skill-based training to sales reps isn't enough to ensure success. An expert sales training company will also enable the leadership team to be able to work those same activities and coach their sales people.

Leadership training is key to ensure your company supports the right skills. Just because your sales people are successful doesn't mean they'll be naturally great in a leadership role. They need training too.

Additionally, social selling training can become a two-way street. Sales leaders should stay open to learning new techniques from sales people.

ALIGN DEPARTMENTS

Unfortunately, sales, marketing, and customer service have traditionally been at odds with each other.

A strong sales training company will incorporate all key players in a certification program. Focusing on customer hand-off points from marketing to sales is critical. When new team members are trained to concentrate on these points, your company will be aligned in focusing on the customer experience.

To increase adoption levels of social selling, include the sales operations, enablement, and marketing teams in training. Doing so will help embed the new way of selling into your company's DNA.

STREAMLINE SALES PROCESSES

Sales professionals spend, on average, **65% of their time on activities other than sales**. A sales training company will help you determine which activities your sales reps are spending the majority of their time on. They'll help address any skills gaps and elevate the performance of your team.

The most effective sales teams apply one methodology consistently. Continuous sales training ensures your team members will keep improving, thus boosting your sales effectiveness results.

SET GOALS AND MEASURE RESULTS

If you can't measure your social selling training results, you won't be able to manage them.

A sales training company will help you set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely) goals that align with your company's priorities. In addition to allowing you to measure your efforts, **setting goals** will also motivate your sales people.

Provide your sales reps with a self-service metric dashboard so they can check their individual performance and progress towards goals.

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WHEN DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO INVEST IN SOCIAL SELLING TRAINING?

Social selling training is not just about teaching your reps how to use LinkedIn tools. Effective training covers content generation, sales enablement technology, metrics for gauging success, and more.

Social selling training shouldn't just function as an add-on to your existing process. Your company needs to learn how to transform your sales methodologies and systems to engage today's buyer. Effective social selling enables sales leaders to implement a strategic social and digital selling program.

So when is the right time to invest in social selling training?

The short answer is right now! We're currently in the age of social selling, and the right training will help you implement a sustainable, long-term strategy.

Before launching a new social selling training program, however, you need to ask yourself this question: Are you planning on using social selling to drive your pipeline and revenue?

“No matter how successful an organization is at traditional selling, it will start its digital transformation from simple beginnings.”

Only invest in training when the answer to this question is “yes” as social selling activities must be tied to your sales objectives.

Every company must **adapt to the digital era** to stay relevant. But no matter how successful an organization is at traditional selling, it will start its digital transformation from simple beginnings.

To understand how social selling training can help your company adapt to today’s business landscape, we’ll examine the five stages of the digital transformation every company will go through. Comprehensive social selling training—not one-off sessions—is needed to make a smooth transition through each step of the process.

As you consider each stage, ask yourself, “Where does my organization fall in this progression?”

STAGE 0: STATUS QUO

At this stage, your organization is complacent. You and your sales team haven't established the mindset that social and digital selling will have a positive impact on your business.

There is little to no buy-in from company leaders on the effectiveness of social, no social governance, and no formal training on social. Sales and marketing couldn't be more disconnected.

STAGE 1: RANDOM ACTS OF SOCIAL

The first stage is where inconsistent social activity happens. At this stage, a handful of sales professionals are using tools such as LinkedIn for research, booking meetings, and connecting with people. There are no best practices or scale at this stage, but some sales professionals are making money by using such tools as LinkedIn.

The problem with this stage is that it allows only a small pocket of sales professionals to make quota, but it isn't helping your business as a whole achieve your sales goals or revenue targets.

If your company has no formalized training program, governance, or best practices, and only a small number of sales professionals are meeting their goals, you'll know you're at this stage.

The right training can help you align your departments and get everyone working towards the same objectives.

STAGE 2: BUILDING A BUSINESS CASE

At this stage, your company is trying to formalize social best practices. But many people in your company likely think social selling only involves LinkedIn. As a result, you've probably made any of these investments:

- Your department's sales tool stack needs to standardize a LinkedIn product, so you invested in LinkedIn Sales Navigator.
- You started training workshops. Someone at your company was chosen to facilitate training: queue the social media marketer or a "digitally native" sales professional who seems to "get it."
- Your sales enablement team is trying to gather ideas for a social selling workshop. You'll learn the basics of social selling and start to redesign your social profiles. Unfortunately, there are usually two missing ingredients. First, what is the roadmap to global change beyond these initial workshops, and how will you measure success? Second, how will you get marketing involved? The sales team will need new insights to share with your customers.

Instead of only arranging one-day workshops, invest in continuous social selling training. In doing so, you'll truly address your sales team's challenges and gain a competitive advantage.

STAGE 3: SCALE

Your organization has top-down executive support to make social a priority. Your front-line sales leaders are driving accountability throughout their salesforce to ensure social actions are reaching the defined measurable milestones. The digital marketing team is working side by side with sales to fuel the insights (content) that sales professionals will use to engage their buyers.

Social selling is manifesting beyond a business unit and seeking to be standardized throughout your entire sales and marketing organization. You acknowledge that more than a few training workshops are needed for social selling success. You and your sales enablement team will seek to weave social into the DNA of your existing sales process.

You'll also make social selling training part of your onboarding process to eliminate the skills gap between existing sales professionals and future new hires.



STAGE 4: SALES AND MARKETING ALIGNMENT

Social selling is simply a by-product of effective sales and marketing alignment at scale across your organization. By integrating the sales and marketing departments, you've increased the flow of new ideas for digital insights.

Great social selling teams recognize that a buyer's journey involves both the marketing and sales efforts; thus, everyone in marketing and sales becomes accountable for winning that new buyer.

At a tactical level, your company would have an insights committee, which is a group of sales professionals that meets regularly with the marketing department to develop new digital insights that fuel sales conversations.

Your team begins to create metrics around the handshake between sales and marketing at the sales qualified lead or opportunity level. Everyone is ultimately accountable to new sales bookings. Marketing is accountable for delivering a percentage of sales qualified leads to achieve a sales professional's quota attainment. Sales is accountable for timely pursuit and proper nurturing of these leads with social selling best practices. You develop a service level agreement between sales and marketing, which becomes the blueprint for accountability among all team members.

This consistently developed intellectual property is repeated by creating a process known as the "Intellectual Property (IP) Transfer Loop." The IP Transfer Loop has a sales professional inform the marketing team of buyer's challenges, so the marketing team can develop a new digital insight for sales reps to share with prospects. As sales shares these insights, prospects offer more feedback, such as objections, concerns, questions.

This cycle will continue to develop more valuable insights for the buyer.



STAGE 5: SALES AND MARKETING INTEGRATION

“Team Revenue” is what we call the interlacing of the marketing and sales departments. Your team recognizes that everyone in digital marketing and sales is accountable for guiding buyers on their journey.

Each team member has also completely understood that no role is more important than another. While sales reps’ and marketers’ business cards and LinkedIn profiles will still show the external world that they have a traditional role and title, internally they are just a member of one unit—Team Revenue. They are accountable to only one number —sales bookings!

WHAT RESULTS CAN YOU EXPECT FROM SOCIAL SELLING?

Social selling can accelerate every stage of your existing sales process. Here are some of the outstanding results you can expect when you implement social selling:

REVENUE GROWTH

Implementing social into the sales process has been proven to positively impact pipeline, revenue, and quota attainment.

In fact, **61% of organizations engaged in social selling** report a positive impact on revenue growth. In many industries, over 50% of a sales rep's quota is made up of social selling sources or influenced deals, according to recent empirical data from LinkedIn.

Social selling enables sales professionals to better qualify leads, write bids, and adjust deal renewal language—which has been correlated to **40 to 50% more new business** and 80-90% retention rates.

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“Implementing social into the sales process has been proven to positively impact pipeline, revenue, and quota attainment.”

QUOTA ATTAINMENT

On average, 67% of sales professionals don't meet their quotas, according to a recent study conducted by the TAS group.

What's causing this? For one, sales reps who are sending out cold calls and emails struggle to talk to people in the market. Modern buyers are wary of sales professionals and tired of hearing sales pitches. Most reps don't do enough research on prospects and are stumped when it comes to starting conversations.

Fortunately, social sellers realize 66% greater quota attainment than those using traditional prospecting techniques.

Social selling enables sales professionals to start conversations with prospects based on proper research. When sales reps know their prospects' likes, dislikes, pain points, industries, how they collaborate with others, and more, they're able to reach out based on known interest points. And they can offer relevant content, which helps your reps form strong connections.

“Most reps don't do enough research on prospects and are stumped when it comes to starting conversations.”

CUSTOMER RETENTION

Social selling doesn't only help you establish new relationships—it's also an excellent strategy to deepen your existing customer relationships.

When you adopt social selling, over 33% of customers are **less likely to cancel or churn**.

The need to retain existing customers and reduce churn rates for all organizations has never been stronger. One way to do so is by providing an exceptional customer experience.

This is where social selling comes into play. When your sales professionals can give your existing clients valuable insights, you'll be better able to retain your current customers and find new business opportunities.

“Modern buyers demand information to make informed decisions.”

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

What's the best way to build and nurture relationships with your prospects and customers? Provide them with real value.

Providing value means teaching your buyer something new that he or she didn't know yesterday.

In fact, **74% of the time**, buyers will choose the sales professionals who were first to add value. Modern buyers demand information to make informed decisions. They'll only engage with sales professionals who are willing and able to provide insights along their journey.

Are your sales professionals providing enough insight to prospects? You should know that 62% of sales pros at large companies agree social selling helps them build stronger and more authentic relationships.

Integrate social into your sales process to amplify relationship building at scale.

EDUCATE CUSTOMERS

Many sales professionals unfortunately don't see the value of educating their buyers. While the marketing department produces blogs, infographics, and webinars, the sales team doesn't think sharing this content will make them more money.

However, **74% of today's B2B buyers** conduct more than half of their research online before making a purchase. This means the content the marketing team produces has real value for your sales team and prospects.

Today's buyer is looking for a partner who provides true insight. To give your buyers what they want, don't sell to them. Instead, educate them. Explain how you have addressed their challenges by using e-books, blogs, tip sheets, and more.

When you establish yourself as a helpful expert in the field, your prospects will remember you before making a buying decision.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Did you know that **78% of sales pros** using social media perform better than their peers?

The best-in-class marketing teams align the content they share with marketing/sales funnel stages. Giving your buyers what they want, where they want it, and when they're ready gives you a huge competitive advantage.

As Mark Cuban, owner of Dallas Mavericks says, "Make your product easier to buy than your competition, or you will find your customers buying from them, not you."



ENGAGE BUYERS ONLINE

Building rapport with prospects is tied to the success of business transactions. Finding common ground and engaging prospects in conversation using traditional means, however, seems almost impossible. In fact, **92% of all executives** delete emails and voicemails right away.

So how can you connect with potential buyers?

Given the dramatic changes in buyer behaviour, social selling is the answer. Sales professionals can share insights and helpful information using social networks like LinkedIn. Social can help sales professionals engage in better conversations, which leads to strong relationships.

Sales reps who engage buyers with content facilitate better relationships and reinforce insights without a sales pitch. Content can come in the form of blogs, e-books, videos, webinars, and more.

WHAT TOOLS DOES YOUR COMPANY NEED FOR SOCIAL SELLING SUCCESS?

To do your job and remain efficient, you need a range of sales tools. But it seems that people can't get enough of the latest gadgets and widgets. Every company claims they have the next best social media tool. How do you know which ones will work best for you?

There are tons of helpful tools out there that can help your business with social selling. To help narrow your search, we've put together some of the **top tools** your company needs for social selling success, broken down by category.

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PROSPECTING

SIDEKICK

This app from HubSpot alerts you when someone interacts with your content and helps you find out if a prospect is worth pursuing.

TIMETRADE

Create an account to make scheduling meetings a breeze. Prospects can schedule themselves on your calendar, and you can include a link within your emails as a call to action.

RAPPORTIVE

Send tailored emails with LinkedIn's Rapportive tool. It's a free Gmail plugin that searches the social web for information about your prospect to qualify them and give you insights into how to get their attention.

BOOMERANG

This free Gmail plugin lets you write all your emails at once and schedule them to send at the most effective times. It'll remind you when to follow up so you can move prospects down the buyer's journey.

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TIMETRADE

Create an account to make scheduling meetings a breeze. Prospects can schedule themselves on your calendar, and you can include a link within your emails as a call to action.

RAPPORTIVE

Send tailored emails with LinkedIn's Rapportive tool. It's a free Gmail plugin that searches the social web for information about your prospect to qualify them and give you insights into how to get their attention.

BOOMERANG

This free Gmail plugin lets you write all your emails at once and schedule them to send at the most effective times. It'll remind you when to follow up so you can move prospects down the buyer's journey.



QUALIFYING

NIMBLE

This CRM automatically pulls social insights for your contacts so your sales team can get all the information they need on prospects in one place.

DATANYZE

This app lets you know who has started or stopped using products or services from your competitors. You know these prospects need what you offer, and some might be unsatisfied with the service they're currently getting.

NURTURING

FEEDLY

This tool makes finding content to share with your prospects and customers easy. You can use it as your main hub to search, organize, and share articles with your audience on social media.

CLEARSLIDE

This sales engagement platform delivers the right content at the right time, which sales reps can draw from to share with their customers. It also provides analytics to help you improve your customer communications.

ENGAGIO

This account-based analytics platform helps you understand the impact your marketing has on your audience, so the sales team can have better conversations with prospects.

PRESENTING

PREZI

This presentation tool helps you articulate the value of your products or services in an engaging and persuasive way.

BRAINSHARK

This sales enablement software helps you transform static content into interactive video presentations.

CANVA

This tool helps you create clear and engaging sales presentations. You can choose from professionally designed business presentation templates and ensure your sales pitch stand out.

GOTOMEETING

This simple and effective presenter tool makes it easy to collaborate online in real time with customers and colleagues.



CLOSING

DOCUSIGN

This online tool helps you quickly close deals. Get the signatures, approvals, and information from the right people, whenever you need it.

SAVO

Savo provides a range of sales enablement tools that help you align your sales and marketing teams, deliver the right message at the right time, and measure the impact of your marketing efforts on sales.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM)

A CRM is a must to manage all your company's customer interactions. It helps you streamline your processes and boost your bottom line.

A few popular CRMs include:

- Salesforce
- Microsoft Dynamics
- HubSpot CRM

When considering any of the tools listed above, ask yourself the following questions:

- What am I trying to accomplish?
- What problem does this tool solve for me?
- Is it easy to use?
- Is it within my budget?
- What's the customer service like?
- Can it integrate with my existing infrastructure?

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HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT SALES TRAINING COMPANY FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Traditional sales training companies that focus on lecturing or individual reading simply won't give you the results you're hoping for.

A good sales training company will make training interactive and continuous. It'll offer more than a few one-off workshops and instead take a blended learning approach.

WHAT IS BLENDED LEARNING?

A blended learning approach incorporates both synchronous and asynchronous learning.

SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

This is when individuals engage in live instruction through a webinar or an interactive class. The sessions focus on examples, exercises, related cases, and Q&As, and include audio/visual components.

As a dynamic and hands-on type of training, it allows individuals to retain much more information.

ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

This is when participants are given resources like e-books, blog posts, videos, practice quizzes, and small assignments to improve adoption and test retention.

When participants need to use what they're learning, it's more likely they'll develop the right habits.

In addition to taking a blended learning approach, look for a sales training company that will help you accomplish these objectives:

CREATE ORGANIZATIONAL AWARENESS

The right company will help you teach your sales people about the changes happening in B2B sales and marketing with insightful keynotes and actionable digital and social selling workshops.

BUILD A BUSINESS CASE

The sales training company should help you understand the state of your organization through tailored assessments and audits. Its team of experts will help you kickstart digital and social selling, get results, and build your case for scale with a robust education and enablement platform.

The initial focus will be to convince your sales team why social selling is so important. Causing a mindset shift can be difficult, but it's what will allow sales to understand why social is needed. Focus on changing your organization's mindset before offering any technology to sales.

“Focus on changing your organization's mindset before offering any technology to sales.”



BREAK THE SILOS

The sales team can't do social selling alone: 67% of companies need marketing to support social selling activities with content, according to a [Forrester report](#). Successful social selling programs require sales and marketing to constantly exchange resources, expectations, and expertise.

Sales reps who engage buyers with content facilitate better relationships and reinforce insights without a sales pitch. The right content can gradually transform ordinary sales professionals into trusted resources, thought leaders, and industry experts. By including sales into the content creation process, you'll be able to create a fundamental alignment between sales and marketing.

If your company is still operating in silos, it will take behavioural change to truly change your ways. A sales training company can help you move past the old ways of measuring success. A social selling organization has its marketing team measured against its delivered percentage contribution of sales quota with sales.

MEASURE YOUR EFFORTS

Improper metrics cause social selling programs to crash and burn the fastest. A sales training company will help you change your company's mindset to measure three levels of indicators:

LEADING INDICATORS

These are the tools and processes you can implement to understand if sales and marketing professionals are digesting new ideas and applying them daily. Leading indicators help you determine if your reps are taking full advantage of social selling. They help you see employee engagement and measure the mindset shift that translates into behaviour.

To measure leading indicators, you can leverage learning management systems during training programs. See who's watching videos and completing assignments, practicums, and certification tests.

CURRENT INDICATORS

These are the tools that help you measure whether or not new learnings are being translated into sales outcomes. These tools include:

CRM

Are social conversations being logged as activity?

MARKETING AUTOMATION

Are social campaigns driving new leads?
What impact is social having on lead generation?

LINKEDIN SALES NAVIGATOR

Are reps leveraging this tool on a day-to-day basis? Which reps are consistent users and driving new social conversations?

EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY

Are your reps frequently sharing insights?
How are their social networks becoming lead-generation machines for your company?

LAGGING INDICATORS

These provide a summary of your efforts in trying to hit major milestones and goals. Lagging indicators help you answer the following questions:

- Are you trying to hit a certain sales quota attainment with a certain percentage being social selling?
- What percentage of your pipeline is attributable to social?
- Is there an incremental change in pipeline because of social?
- What net new bookings and conversations can be attributed to social conversations?

SCALE YOUR SUCCESS

Ensure the company you partner with can help drive accountability, measure your activities, and scale digital and social selling success with an integrated strategy.

They should be able to help you develop a sustainable social program. While sales professionals use different strategies, adopting best practices and ensuring scalability across the organization is key.

CONCLUSION

It's time to move on from traditional, ineffective sales tactics. Social selling is a must to survive in today's modern sales environment.

Embracing social selling will help you meet quotas, elevate your core performers, increase your pipeline and revenue, and maximize your profitability.

To engage the modern buyer, you need to transform your sales process. However, it can be difficult to know the best practices for implementing social selling and measuring its impact. That's why many companies choose to invest in social selling training. Continuous training is crucial to see the best results in social activity, pipeline, and revenue.

While social selling is sure to continue evolving in the future, continuous training will help you adopt a sustainable, holistic social selling strategy.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[50 Best Social Media Tools From 50 Most Influential Marketers Online](#) | Content Marketing Institute

[4 Ways to Boost Your Social Selling Profile \(Courtesy of LinkedIn\)](#) | Inc

[How to Use Twitter for Social Selling \[SlideShare\]](#) | HubSpot

[How To Win Business By Social Selling Via LinkedIn](#) | Forbes

[Social Selling on LinkedIn: The Ultimate Guide](#) | HubSpot

[The Future of Selling](#) | OgilvyOne Worldwide

[Social Sells - The Mini-Guide to Social Selling](#) | Salesforce

[Transforming the Business through Social Tools](#) | McKinsey & Company

[Social Selling: The New Normal for World-Class Performers](#) | CSO Insights

[The Social Selling Index](#) | LinkedIn

[Business 2 Community](#)

[AA-ISP](#)

[Sirius Decisions](#)

TRANSFORM YOUR SALES PROCESS WITH SALES FOR LIFE

Sales for Life is the global leader in building, scaling, and managing social selling programs. Founded in 2004, we help B2B companies create behavioural change and enable them with the right competencies to engage today's buyer.

We train sales and marketing organizations—from leaders to individual contributors. With the Social Selling Mastery™ training program, we provide a prescriptive training approach to acquire digital selling skills, accelerate pipeline, and boost sales. We've built social selling programs for over 300 clients in nearly every industry, ranging from start-ups to Fortune 500 corporations.

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