



Being Human

Marketing & Social Selling
in a Digital World

Sudhir Kumar

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FOREWORD

Each person is unique, with challenges and pain points they wish to overcome in their personal or professional life or both.

As we move into a world which is becoming even more digital as the days go by, we're finding that some traditional approaches to marketing are no longer fit for purpose.

From my experience as a marketer of 15 years, this book is designed to help you overcome the challenges that face us as human beings in the digital world we now live in.

Writing from my perspective, I will share my approach for human-to-human interaction in a professional setting; from social selling to account based marketing, to crafting compelling content and navigating social media channels to optimise their output to benefit you and your business. Everything is based upon results - it's all tried and tested, and has led to healthy pipelines and return on investment in the millions.

This book isn't just for fellow marketers and sales professionals. It's for anyone who wants to cut through the noise and have a true relationship with their audience.

I hope it brings value and insight into your world.

“

“I am not the richest, smartest or most talented person in the world, but I succeed because I keep going and going and going”

Sylvester Stallone

*This book is dedicated to everyone
who has believed in me. Thank you
to all I consider my family and
friends.*

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INTRODUCTION

WE NOW LIVE IN A DIGITAL WORLD



I remember the days when you had dial-up internet; when AOL, Napster and MSN Messenger were all the rage. We've come a long way since then, and I think it's safe to say that we live in a digital world. We are all connected thanks to our smartphones, tablets and devices - you may even be reading this on your Kindle or listening to the audio version on your commute.

Have you ever left your phone at home? How did you feel? A huge disconnect, right? You probably didn't know the time or the latest news because we now rely on technology so much that it's part of our daily routines. There is always a positive and a negative to everything, and this is no different.

We are truly spoilt as human beings because we have access to so much at the tap of a button. From swiping to get a date, tracking your Amazon parcel, paying via your smartwatch, to

watching a YouTube video on how to configure your car's entertainment system. It's pretty impressive if you take a step back and consider it all.

But on the flip side, because we are so connected and take our devices with us wherever we go, it's hard for us to put them down. It's the norm to go to dinner, coffee shops, even the football and be on our phones. As humans, we've completely changed the way we behave, communicate and interact thanks to this digital world we now live in.

In return, this has had a huge impact on businesses because the buyer and buying process has completely changed, too.

THE BUYING PROCESS

Not that long ago, consumers didn't have information at their fingertips. Marketers and sales representatives were often successful in using outbound methods such as cold calling and sending email blasts in order to close sales.

Well, things have changed.

We've entered a new decade and we no longer like being interrupted. Let's be honest: when was the last time you answered a cold call, or responded to a cold email? Hell, even YouTube adverts are annoying when we can't hit the skip button. So, why have we become so impatient? We're busy people, and with technology at our fingertips we are time-sensitive and we only want to focus on things that are of interest to us.

I know there may be some of you reading this who are happy to stick to your traditional methods of email blasts and cold calls. And you know what, if that works for you, carry on. But for me, these methods are becoming less effective. InsideView have reported that 90% of people never respond to cold calls.

Calls and emails are good tactics, but they need to be used on warm prospects, and sent at the right time.

Enter: the new sales process, focused on gaining permission rather than being intrusive.

Old and new

The diagram below shows the difference between old and new sales processes:



57% of the purchase decision is complete before a customer even calls a supplier (CEB), and 67% of the buyer's journey is now done digitally (SiriusDecisions).

This reinforces my point about the modern buyer. We have evolved. We are now seeking information relevant to us. Let's take buying a car, for example. Remember the days when you would walk into a dealership and rely on the salesperson to give you all the information you need, as well as a brochure to take home? Well, now we can access all the information we need before we even enter a dealership. We can go one step further, and customise our vehicles as well as find the most competitive price. The modern buyer has the upper hand.

The same applies in the B2B world. Buyers have the same behavioural traits; they are actively researching. In the B2B world, it's all about helping your prospects overcome challenges and pain points they may be facing in their role. In some instances, they may not be aware of this particular pain point, but it's your job and opportunity to make sure that when they do, you are at the front of their mind. Ultimately, you are looking to gain their permission to engage with them.

To do this, you need to truly understand your audience and cater for their needs. This is where you need to take a customer-centric approach.

Customer-centric

Customer centricity is about creating a positive experience for your customers. This experience never ends. It starts with their first interaction all the way through to post-sale. By offering a positive customer experience, you improve your chances of repeat business, customer loyalty and growth.

When I say customer-centric, I'm not just talking about offering them good service.

I'm talking about building relationships and offering them value in a genuine way. As I've said, to do this you first need to understand your customer. Why do I keep mentioning this? Well, to truly understand your customers and prospects you need to invest time. This isn't about creating fictional buyer personas or guesswork. This is about understanding your audience on a human-to-human level. Then, once you understand your audience, you can start to serve them.

But, once you've done that, what do you serve them with? An eBook, and then call up everyone who does a form fill?

No!

This is intrusive - you should do the opposite. Serve them with content and touchpoints that are relevant to them. Give them information and insight that is of value in a personalised way. By taking this approach, you are focusing on building a level of rapport and trust. In return, this will help to reinforce your relationship and your brand. By serving your audience, you will gain permission to develop the relationship further to the point you can start to offer them solutions to the problems they may or may not already be aware of.

LinkedIn reported that 92% of B2B buyers are willing to engage with a sales professional who is a known industry thought leader. You can build this reputation by consistently posting thoughtful, relevant content on social media that you know will resonate with your audience.

Look back at the diagram of the new sales process. These are all things you need to consider and take on board when it comes to adopting a customer-centric approach.

Start listening

So, I know you're thinking, "That's all well and good, but what do we serve them *with*?" Well, my friends, this is where social listening comes into play.

It's time to do your research!

You can use social listening and other social research strategies to find prospects, but those contacts who are already engaging with social media to find potential vendors are performing independent research to make an informed decision, all before contacting a sales professional.

According to LinkedIn, 76% of buyers are ready to have a social media conversation with potential providers, and more than 62% of B2B buyers respond to salespeople who connect with them to share insights and opportunities relevant to their business.

By using social listening tools, you can learn the words your audience tend to use when they talk about your industry, and begin to understand the challenges they have. This will give you a good sense of what kind of insights are most useful to them, so you can start to resonate with your audience.

Here are a few keywords and topics you can start to monitor:

- Your brand name and handles
- Your product name(s), including common misspellings
- Your competitors' brand names, product names and handles
- Industry buzzwords
- Your strapline and those of your competitors
- Names of key people in your company and your competitors' companies (your CEO, spokesperson, etc.)

- Campaign names or keywords
- Your branded hashtags and those of your competitors
- Unbranded hashtags related to your industry

Social listening is all about understanding your audience. Find out what your audience is talking about when it comes to you, your brand and your industry.

Don't you want to listen?

By listening, you show you care about your audience. As a result of investing time to understand them, as well as their wants and needs, you gain the opportunity to take these insights and apply them to your outreach to keep potential leads engaged, helping to reinforce your brand positioning and reputation.

Key Takeaways

- It's 2021. The buyer and the buyer's journey have evolved. This means we need to evolve our sales and marketing approaches, too.
- Don't be intrusive using tactics like cold calling. These just annoy your potential prospects. Be helpful! Give your audience the information they seek in their preferred format.
- Don't sell to them, but look to build rapport. If you want to cut through the noise, you need to understand your audience and focus on building relationships with them.
- Positioning yourself as an expert is key. If you can provide your audience with the information they seek about a particular subject matter, you will be seen in a positive light, especially when compared to a traditional sales professional. The modern buyer is seeking information, so while they are searching, make sure you have presence.
- You should have gathered that it's important to understand your audience, and how social listening tools can give you the insight you need to start to resonate with them. Understand the challenges your potential prospects are facing and help to educate them on how to overcome them.

“

*‘Education is the most powerful
weapon which you can use
to change the world’*

Nelson Mandela

THE RIGHT MINDSET

We've established that the buyer and the buyer's journey has changed - I mean, it's a new decade and as the world evolves, we need to evolve with it. When it comes to sales and marketing, we need to approach it with the right mindset.

What do I mean by this? Well, in a nutshell, stop selling and start adding value!

The buyer has the upper hand, and they are savvy. Let's be honest: who likes to be sold to? Who likes spam emails? Who likes cold calls? Who likes being pressured into a purchase? None of us, right? So, if *you* don't like it then why do you expect your audience or potential buyers to?

If you want to grow your business, you need to realise it's about relationships and establishing trust, and not about selling.

How do we do this? You need to communicate with your audience and express a desire to fulfil their needs to help them overcome challenges they may be facing, or offer pathways to

help solve their business problems. This is exactly how you add value – by using your insight and knowledge and sharing that through your content and touchpoints.

We will cover content in the following chapter, but before we consider creating it, we need to make sure we first have the right mindset when it comes to our marketing and touchpoints.

To help you, always consider the following.

The four Es

Educate

Why educate? We know none of us like to be sold to. Your audience doesn't care about your products or services; they care about themselves.

You should focus on producing content that fulfils the wants, needs and interests of your audience. This will allow them to build trust and emotional connections to your brand. Don't make the mistake of focusing on what *you* want to say - instead, focus on what your audience wants to learn from you.

Ask yourself the following:

What information can I share that will provide value to my target audience or personas?

What are the common pain points Person A faces that I can help with?

What industry news can I share with my insights added?

What's current and trending?

Educating your audience will make your efforts shine, whether you do this through webinars, eBooks or in person. As

long as you are relevant and putting in effort to educate, you will have the upper hand.

Entertain

Now, I know this one may throw you a little but stay with me. Just because you're educating your audience, doesn't mean you can't entertain them at the same time. The type of content you produce will depend on your audience and the channels they prefer, but in our sales and marketing world, these will be pretty similar, such as LinkedIn.

By all means, create eBooks, vlogs, webinars, blogs, slide shares, podcasts and more. But remember: just because you're using a professional channel like LinkedIn, it doesn't mean you can't entertain. We all love stories, and there is nothing more central to the human experience than storytelling. Facts, statistics and theories have a part to play, but add in emotion, empathy and humour to really get across that human touch.

Keep your stories short and relatable and make sure they connect to the purpose of your content.

Finally, don't forget to put your stamp on your content. You need to let your audience understand more about you. They need and want that human connection, so get your thoughts, experience and insights across in your own way.

Don't mimic others. Be you, and be authentic.

Engage

Communicate with your audience. With mobile devices and the Internet of Things (IoT), we have a huge opportunity to communicate with our audience at anytime, anywhere in the world. You should treat your audience and potential buyers as

humans and not as leads or numbers. Have human interactions and meaningful conversations, and invest the time to truly understand them.

When it comes to your content, don't be afraid to engage and interact with your potential prospects to get them involved. Ask questions, get them to give feedback, use polls, give them opportunities to speak up - this in turn makes them feel valued and builds your authenticity.

You can even go one step further and send them personal notes, messages, or even a video message. Show your audience you are real and interested in them and their feedback.

Emotional

Often overlooked in the B2B world, content with emotion appeals to human beings on a deeper level. If we take into consideration neuroscience, it's shown on a number of occasions that decisions are made at an emotional level. In the 1990s, neuroscientist Antonio Damasio conducted a study and concluded that, "Emotions and feelings are not a luxury, they are means of communicating our states of mind to others, but they are also a way of guiding our own judgements and decisions." So, if we really want to connect with our audience and influence them, we need to connect with them at an emotional level.

Personally, I'm not a fan of using fear or anxiety to attempt to move people into action. My advice would be to focus more on the excitement of solving problems, helping to relieve their anxieties and overcome their pain points. Make them happy by taking an interest in them, learn about their challenges and goals. Craft a story that shows their problem and position you, your business, your brand and your service offering as the solution. If you have worked with that particular persona within

that particular industry, let it be known. Draw upon the experience, let the reader know you understand them and you understand what they are feeling, as this gives them an opportunity to resonate.

Remember that when it comes to content, it's not an opportunity to just talk about yourself. Create content that delivers true value to your audience and give them the content they need and want. In return, this will help your prospects learn, grow and improve which will result in a positive outcome when it comes to you and your personal brand.

Stop selling and start adding value

Businesses are built upon relationships, and relationships are all about establishing trust, rapport and value. I know I've said this already, but no one really *wants* to be sold to - not even me or you. We are all busy people, we are selfish, and we only really want to communicate with someone we consider an expert, who can help to solve our problems.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, we need to evolve and adopt a new mindset.

In 2013, Gary Vaynerchuk wrote the book, *Jab, Jab, Jab, Right hook: How to tell your story in a noisy social world*. The analogy is that the jab is giving value, and the right hook is when you go to extract value. It's a great book and if you haven't read it, I recommend you do. In today's world, I think it's more jabs and no hooks. If you're truly giving value, you don't need the sales pitch or message. If you truly resonate with your audience, have built that rapport, trust and confidence, prospects will naturally want to do business with you.

See the difference? If ever in doubt, put yourself in your audience's shoes - after all, they are humans too.

This leads me nicely to my next point: we are all human beings, so this means we can spot a sales strategy and pitch a mile off. If you're using the same methods and techniques from 10, 20, 30 years ago, it won't resonate anymore. You're not only wasting your time, but you're also annoying your potential customers. Today's buyer is savvy - we all are - but why? Because we have the IoT. Today's buyer does their homework before making purchasing decisions.

In truth, the vast majority of the buying journey and decisions begin and often conclude on the internet, so you need to be visible. Yes, search engine optimisation (SEO), adverts, and content all have a part to play, but for me this is where you should leverage social selling. By simply having a presence on the right channels for your audience, be it YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter etc., you are opening up new communication channels, making yourself visible to those looking to find out what you have to offer.

Key Takeaways

- Stop selling and start adding value!
- Remember your audience are human beings. So, treat them like one.
- Try and connect with your audience through content. Craft stories that not only get your points across, but entertain at the same time.
- If you want to grow your business, it's about relationships and establishing trust, and not about selling.
- Remember, we all love stories, and there is nothing more central to the human experience than storytelling.
- Facts, statistics and theories have a part to play, but add in some emotion. Incorporate empathy and humour to get across that human touch.
- Keep your stories short and relatable, and make sure they connect to the purpose of your content.
- Don't be afraid to reach out to your audience and have conversations around content or their feedback.
- If you are using the same methods and techniques from 30 years ago, they won't resonate anymore.
- The vast majority of the buying journey and decisions begin and often conclude on the internet, so you need to be visible in the digital space.

“

*‘If you’re not putting out relevant
content in relevant places, you
don’t exist’*

Gary Vaynerchuk

CONTENT



Why is it important?

Let's take into consideration the current landscape and our habits as human beings. It's 2021, and you're most likely consuming this book on a tablet, listening to it via your phone – or, you're reading a hard copy.

We now act in an entirely different way to how we did a decade ago. We can order a pizza, a taxi and tickets to the cinema all from our phones within minutes with the technology at our fingertips. The way we behave, think, interact and communicate has changed as a result. It's had a huge impact on the modern buyer and the buyer's journey. The modern buyer now has access to so much information, and they're hungry for more.

I remember when I first started training at the gym. There was no YouTube or Instagram then. To learn about diet, training methods and mindset, I could either seek advice at the gym from the owner, the members, or the PT, or I could buy books and magazines.

I opted for books.

Today, I can easily access this information in video and audio formats, and I can even watch an exercise and then perform it whilst I'm at the gym. Today, we can access information when we want, in the format we want, on the channels we prefer, all at our convenience.

As of 2020, there were 3.96 billion active social media users worldwide, presenting a huge opportunity for businesses and brands, as well as marketing and sales professionals (DataReportal).

As I've highlighted, buyers are now actively seeking information online, and it's important you are visible in and around their ecosystems. Not to mention that 57% of the purchase decision is complete before a customer has even called a supplier (CEB), plus, 67% of the buyer's journey is now done digitally (SiriusDecisions). And let's be honest, most of the modern sales cycle is written content.

So, what does this mean? It's time to get writing. But before you say you can't write, take a step back and consider what you write every day – from emails, texts, Slack messages to WhatsApp exchanges, adverts, proposals and LinkedIn messages. Marketing can and should help, but in the first instance, it's the insight that's important.

You need clear writing which is a sign of clear thinking. It's about communicating clearly and making things easy for your audience to understand.

So, what do you write about? Ask yourself the following:

- What problems do your customers have?
- What pain points and challenges do the people you interact with regularly face?
- What are the solutions to these problems?
- Are they expensive?

- What are the benefits for their business?
- What are the benefits for specific personnel?
- How long do they take to implement?
- Who is involved in the process?
- What are the key influencers in the industry talking about?
- Do you agree with them?

To make your writing work, you must engage your audience on their terms. This will position you as an expert in a particular topic, someone authentic and trustworthy – and because of this, your audience will be more likely to show interest and see you as the go-to person for that specific problem.

I'm a marketer, and I can write (well, I hope so) - but my content will lack depth if I lack the experience on my subject matter. If I've had hands-on experience, I can distill that into my content which will leave the audience with an authentic and rich piece of content. Less 'Top 10 Tips' and more specific, insightful content.

Remember, people switch off from overt marketing and don't like the feeling of being sold to, so aim to educate and entertain your audience instead.

After all, content is king!

Cut through the noise

'Cut through the noise' means to communicate in a way that garners attention. The 'noise' in this phrase refers to all the promotions and advertising in today's marketplace, as defined by Quora. Cutting through the noise will allow you to attract the right people to your brand, business, profile and website. Remember: it's not a 'spray and pray' mentality. Yes, you want

to cut through the noise, but you want to cut through the noise and attract the right people.

To put things into perspective, digest the following:

- As of June 2019, there were over 4.5 billion internet users in the world
- 80% of online content is available in just one-tenth of all languages
- Google handles 1.2 trillion searches every year
- YouTube had 4.5 million videos viewed every minute in 2019 and 500 hours of video uploaded
- Every 24 hours, 500 million tweets are posted on Twitter
- 2.1 million snaps were created in 2019 on Snapchat
- LinkedIn has 260 million monthly active users
- Content on LinkedIn receives about 9 billion impressions per week
- More than 347,222 users were scrolling Instagram every 60 seconds in 2019
- By 2025, there will be 75 billion IoT devices

The above stats should frame just how much noise we're exposed to through the various channels available to us, and how we're consuming that content.

In the B2B world, buyers are dealing with a bombardment of marketing messages that they don't care about. Again, look at things from your perspective - how does the following make you feel?

- Auto playing online video advertisements
- Telemarketing calls
- Pop up online advertisements
- Direct mails, adverts or promotional mailers

Do you express a dislike for the above? So will your audience, because it's intrusive. That approach is dated and now that the power lies with the customer, they can skip through your ads at the click of a button.

But you can stand out from the crowd without being intrusive - it's about being remarkable. I'm sure you're aware of Purple Cow and its author Seth Godin. It's a great book that focuses on how you, your brand and your business needs to stand out from the crowd and be 'remarkable.' I love the analogy of the purple cow, but being remarkable isn't enough. As a marketer, I'm in the growth business, and for that to happen I need to deliver sales.

To be remarkable, I need to make meaningful content for my audience - but how do I do this?

Personalised marketing.

I'm not taking about standard personalisation like the first name on an email. I'm talking about understanding your audience and talking to them on their terms. You're not marketing to the masses but focused on your ideal customers. Those targets are not only high value, but ones you know would benefit from your service offering. You need to take the time to understand your audience on a whole new level, particularly their behaviour.

Ask yourself...

- What gets them up in the morning?
- What challenges do they face on a daily basis?
- What keeps them awake at night?
- What digital channels do they live on?
- How active are they online?
- What content are they consuming?
- Are they part of any groups or associations?

...are you with me?

You really need to invest the time to understand your audience so you can create realistic buyer personas.

Next, how are you going to communicate with your audience? Remember we are trying to cut through the noise and be remarkable, so, for me it's about resonating with your audience.

Talk to them on their terms, offer them insight and value in a form of communication they want. But don't stop there: make sure it's in a tone of voice they like and in a format that's suitable. This could be a blog, webinar, podcast or even a video brochure. The key is to focus on resonating with your audience. You've taken the time to understand them so you can talk to them on their level and in return be informative and insightful, which results in a positive experience. It's then your job to make sure this experience continues with every touch-point and interaction so you can build trust.

Thought leadership

When it comes to your content, if done right, it can lead to the development of material which attracts your target audience and inspires them to take action. Does it mean that people will read your content and instantly turn into a hot lead or sale? No. The goal of your content is to educate and inspire them to trust you, to reinforce your reputation and establish yourself as a thought leader. All of these allow you to build relationships that are nurtured towards your sales and growth.

In essence, this is what we call thought leadership.

The purpose and end goal of thought leadership is to become a recognised expert within your industry, a go-to resource, a trusted advisor, someone who knows what they're talking

about. You want to be that person they turn to for advice, or to find a solution to their problem.

I remember when I first started to post native content in 2015 which was focused around ABM. I was consistent and produced a range of content from blogs, guides and vlogs. My visibility and awareness increased over time, and I can say that after 6 months my network not only grew but so did my reputation. I got approached about my ABM services via LinkedIn. It was after an online conversation that I understood the power of content and thought leadership. The prospect at the time hadn't been on my radar, but had been considering implementing an ABM approach in their SaaS business based in Manchester. After searching on Google and reading various resources, they found me and started to follow me on LinkedIn. They reached out to me for an initial discussion, which led to a face-to-face meeting. It was there they told me they had been following me for months and consuming my content, and went on to add that he agreed to a face-to-face meeting after the dialogue because he realised I was as genuine as my posts and I didn't try to sell to him in the first instance, instead keeping the conversation consultative, taking the time to really listen to him and his problems.

You see how you need to be truly authentic – it's not something you can fake. This leads me on nicely to my next point, which is all about being you.

Be you, be authentic

This is exactly what my marketing does, and I practice what I preach to my clients, too. I'm not going to push people into buying things; for me, it's about drawing them in to listen.

I focus first. I focus on my purpose, my ‘why’ (thank you Simon Sinek), and once I have this focus, I can start to focus (I said it again) on pulling the right people towards me. How? By providing value. Don’t focus on your product or its features but more about your experience, the emotion, the empathy, how *you* make them feel about your offering and themselves.

Ok, so you might be thinking that’s a bit too deep and it’s going down the fluffy marketing route, but we’re far from it. I’m no salesman. I’m a transparent and honest marketer and I love what I do. When I speak to my audience about their businesses, pain points and goals, I don’t go down the route of selling them the dream or telling them why our agency is better than the next. I listen and offer them a solution that I feel is right for them, which is based on our rationale.

I speak to them on their terms, jargon-free and give them the insight they need. I don’t do death by PowerPoint or offer an off-the-shelf solution. I will map out a solution on a whiteboard and make it a collaborative process, keeping the client involved every step of the way. This approach allows me to get my personality across which builds trust. Plus, I love what I do, so the way I work is fun, exciting and methodical, which is reflected in my body language. What draws people to you is your personality from the way you talk, what you believe in and even the way you dress.

When’s the last time someone commented on *you* rather than your products or services? For example, “Loved your recent vlog, it had some great insights” or “Your guide was a great help, it helped me understand how to do X.” What does that have to do with selling? Nothing, yet they are ‘why’ people buy.

When I produce content in whatever format I always stick to these rules:

- Be myself
- Offer value
- Be authentic
- Create content for a purpose

Always be helping

I don't just simply write blogs and guides, I go one step further and create short vlogs on subject matters I feel are relevant to my audience. Why? Because this builds authenticity and trust.

People get to put a face to a name. If how I speak and come across on camera is the same as when they meet me or speak to me on the phone, that builds trust, and trust builds connections. If you want to have any foundation in your career or business, trust is a solid one.

Take Gary Vaynerchuk. We've all heard of him, and no doubt digested some of his content. But what else stands out about him? His energy, his body language, his personality, the way he stands out against the status quo. These are all factors which have contributed to his success.

Muhammad Ali, in my eyes, was ahead of his time in terms of his thinking. He will always be remembered for his boxing first as the 'greatest of all time' but what else do you remember about him? His energy, his body language, his personality, the way he dressed, the way he talked. Can you see how he built his own personal brand? It still has appeal today, which is why Under Armour released a clothing line dedicated to him.

In a nutshell, that's my approach to marketing. Be authentic, build trust and be yourself. As Simon Sinek says, "people don't buy what you do, they buy *why* you do it."

The Mere Exposure Effect

The Mere Exposure Effect was systematically examined in 1968 by social psychologist, Robert Zajonc. According to this social phenomenon, the more a person gets exposed to something, the more they develop a preference towards that thing over time.

As we now live in a digital world, we have the perfect opportunity to take advantage of this effect. With the vast range of online channels, your messages can be seen as someone scrolls through their LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram feeds. These platforms make it possible for you to share content and have touchpoints with your target audience multiple times a day, which can increase your visibility.

What you share will determine how successful this approach is for you. If you are just going to share sales messages and CTAs, you will annoy your audience. Instead, share content that adds value, offers insight and information. Don't forget to inspire and educate your audience, too. This will allow you to take advantage of the Mere Exposure Effect.

Key Takeaways

- You want to cut through the noise, but you also want to attract the *right* people.
- You can stand out from the crowd without being intrusive.
- You need to invest the time to understand your audience so you can create realistic buyer personas.
- Resonate with your audience. Talk to them on their terms, offer them insight and value in a form of communication they want to receive.
- The goal of your content is to educate your audience, customers and prospects, to inspire them to trust you, reinforce your reputation, and establish yourself as a thought leader. All of these allow you to build relationships that are nurtured towards your sales and growth.

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*“Authenticity is when you say and
do things you actually believe”*

Simon Sinek

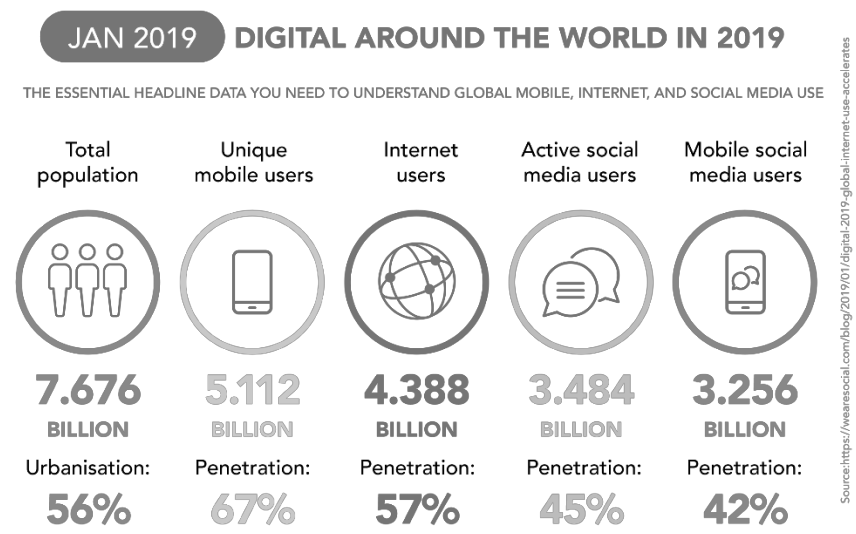
SOCIAL MEDIA



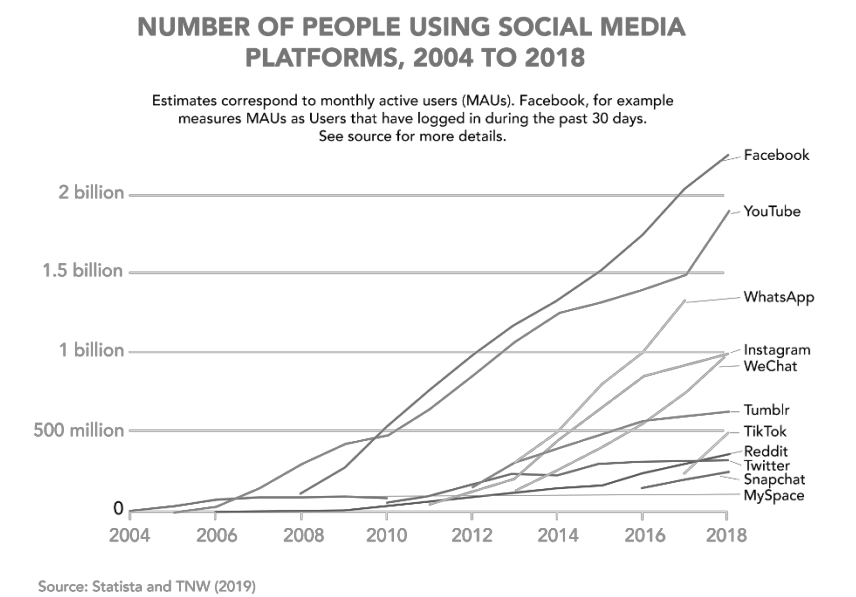
The usage

Consider that more than 50% of the world's population are online, and 45% of them are using social networks. It seems like social media sites have been around forever, but they first came onto the scene in 1997. Sixdegrees.com was one of the first, and from there, things began to take off in the early 2000s with MySpace, Facebook and Twitter changing our worlds.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the book, we now live in a digital world and the way we interact, behave and communicate has completely changed, and social media has a huge part to play. The way social media platforms and technology evolve influence our behaviour, which presents a huge opportunity for you to reach your audience.



Every business needs to leverage social media channels. Not because it’s the in thing, and not because it sounds simple, but because your target audience is ‘hanging out’ online.



As you can see in the forthcoming chart, some social media channels have been around for some time, and the reason is down to what they offer. Channels are evolving and giving users more options - I remember when Twitter added the image feature to posts back in 2011, and it completely changed the way we viewed and interacted with content.

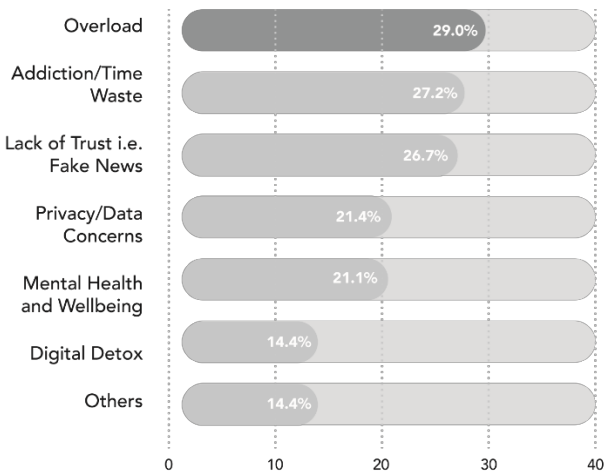
As channels evolve, we must do the same - especially when it comes to our approach using these channels to reach and engage with our audience.

By investing in social media, you have an opportunity to not only stay front of mind and generate more business, but also to connect with your customers on a higher level. By taking the time to connect with your audience you have an opportunity to build trust and rapport on a human-to-human level. This is something often missing in other marketing efforts.

When it comes to social media, approach it by being social. Don't see this as an opportunity to spam, or to get so in the face of your audience with ads that you end up putting them off. In fact, having a digital detox is a common thing now. Exposure Ninja reported that one in three adults in the UK are now reducing their social media use. This includes some people removing apps and permanently deleting accounts.

29% OF PEOPLE DELETED/REMOVED
SOCIAL MEDIA BECAUSE THEY
FELT OVERLOADED BY IT

What was your reasoning for deleting/suspending/reducing
your social media usage?



Reference: Exposure Ninja

As a marketer, this really does highlight the impact social media has. It’s a great platform, but we do need to take into consideration human elements such as overload and mental health.

Social media is powerful, and it shouldn’t be abused. If you want to take the mentality of more bang for your buck and apply that to social media, then you too will add to the digital detox numbers.

Instead, I would encourage you to take on board the mindset and approach I’ve outlined in this book, which is to ensure that your social media presence is as meaningful as possible.

Offer your audience more than memes of kittens; deliver them value, content that has a positive impact, interact with them, and invest the time to use social media correctly.

The engagement

We all want it, but how many of us are actually getting any? The more engaged your audience is, the more exposure your posts will get, which will help you develop more meaningful relationships.

But, in the first instance: what is social media engagement? This varies, but it really comes down to the following metrics:

- Likes
- Comments
- Shares
- Retweets
- Follows
- Connections
- Click-throughs
- Views

As mentioned, these will vary per platform, but in essence these metrics will allow you to measure and get an understanding of your social media effectiveness.

If you're not taking the time to understand your audience or not wanting to connect with them on a human level, you will fail miserably.

When it comes to social media, being social is key. Engaging with your audience lets your audience know you're real, and human traits make a huge difference when it comes to building a relationship and trust. Putting a real face to a profile makes a difference. How many of you have questioned

whether or not to accept a connection request when the user didn't have an image?

Why do we do this? Human instinct. Are they real? Is this a bot? Is this a spam account?

When it comes to social media, your audience wants to talk to real people, whether that's your business or you as a person. Faceless social media won't cut it. Top brands like Nike, Starbucks, Halo Top, Gymshark and Netflix have got this nailed. They understand that social media can be used to inform their audience's purchasing decisions, enhance their credibility, and create a connection through an online community.

Let's take Gymshark. They have seen ridiculous growth, and it's safe to say a good proportion of that has been thanks to social networking. They have a huge number of followers and have created a community who are active across Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Spotify – I mean, who doesn't love a good gym playlist?

But what's been key has been their mindset. They haven't focused on using social to pump sales messages, but instead have focused their efforts on building brand awareness and providing value with their content, with workouts and meal prep coming directly from athletes to camera.

On Instagram, Gymshark have three separate accounts: @gymshark, @gymsharkwomen and @gymsharktrain. These accounts are self-explanatory in terms of what they offer to their combined audience of over 5- million, but what's key here is their mindset and end goal. On their main page, @gymshark, they don't link to a product page. Opportunity missed? No, because their main goal is to engage and educate their audience with campaigns and events. Gymshark know this approach will eventually drive sales, but in a non-intrusive, credible way.

Gymshark have taken the time to understand their audience, and because of that they know their audiences will react differently to campaigns across their channels. This required them to understand and choose the correct tone of voice per channel, so they could deliver the correct message in the right format. That takes time, but it will get you the engagement you want.

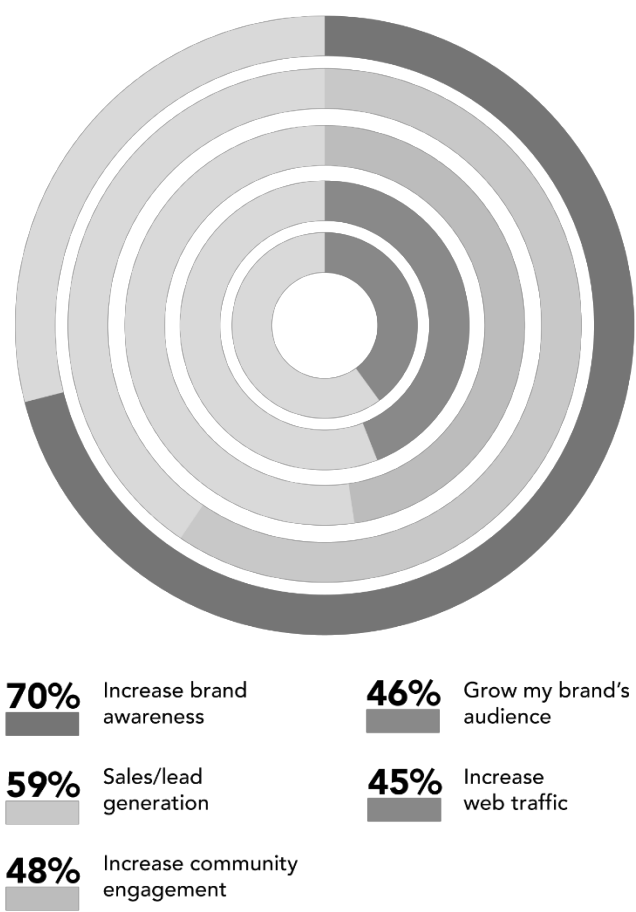
Great example, right? But what's your goal? We are all different. We all have our own preferences, goals and objectives, and when it comes to social media it's no different.

Your engagement is going to look different from mine, and different again from Gymshark. So, let's look at defining your goals.

The goal

Defining your goal is no easy task. I've come across this problem a number of times, be it with clients or friends. A Sprout Social report noted that nearly half of marketers struggle when it comes to aligning and defining their social media goals.

SOCIAL MARKETERS' TOP GOALS FOR SOCIAL



Reference: Sprout Social

This diagram shows how much goals can vary, which is why there is no ‘right’ answer to what yours should be. With this in mind, I want to give you a structure to follow when it comes to defining your social media goals.

First off, look at the bigger picture: what are you trying to do? Start with a white board session and list it out, then review what’s written. This could be growing the followers you have,

increasing your brand awareness, generating leads for your new product or boosting your customer loyalty. You get the picture.

These are very broad, but they give you an area of focus so you can drill down and become more specific. At this point, you should adopt the SMART framework.

SMART is:

Specific

- Does your goal clearly and specifically define what you are trying to achieve on social?
- If you have a large goal, try breaking it down into smaller, specific SMART goals, like goals by social channel, social tactic, or social metric.

Measurable

- How will you know if progress is being made towards achieving your goals?
- Can you quantify or put numbers to your outcome?
- How will you share those numbers?

Attainable

- Is achieving your goals dependent on others? E.g. your IT team or marketing department?
- How can you align these teams and get them working towards achieving the same goals?
- Are there any factors that may prevent you from achieving your goals?
- Is it possible to reframe your goal so it only depends on you and not others?

Realistic

- How realistic are the goals and time frames you are setting?

Timely

- How will you know if progress is being made towards achieving your social goals?
- Can you quantify your outcome?
- How will you share those numbers?

Sorry to take you down memory lane, but I thought it was important and relevant to go through the SMART framework.

With my experience of working in-house then switching to agency-side, I know the types of pressures you will be faced with. With anything related to marketing, it's all about ROI. Social media is no different, that's why if you can take the time to define your goals, you can show the ROI from your activity.

So, a way to put this into practice would be to use the SMART framework based on the example below.

Overall goal: Increase brand awareness over the next four months for my social selling platform, Origin Blurbs on LinkedIn.

Specific

- Connect with local social media managers within a 30-mile radius.

Measurable

- Increase number of impressions on product post by 15%
- Increase number of views of product video overview by 15%
- Have an average post reach of 1,000

Attainable

- Yes

Realistic

- Boost posts by sponsoring them and doing targeted ads with an advertising budget of £500 per month.

Timely

- 4 month time limit to achieve this goal and report back.

Now, the above example is one I actually carried out when it came to the promotion of our social selling platform, Origin Blurbs.

One of the key things I needed to show was ROI and to understand and present the data with an analytics tool or suite. When it comes to tools and tech stacks, it's really down to personal preference, so I won't be listing anything here. But what I will say is to make sure that whatever you decide to invest in is correct for you and your business.

Key Takeaways

- Every business needs to leverage social media channels in the best possible way. Not because it's the in thing, and not because it sounds simple, but because your target audience is 'hanging out' online.
- As channels evolve, we must do the same, especially when it comes to our approach using these channels to reach and engage with our audience.
- By investing in social media, you have an opportunity to not only stay front of mind and generate more business, but also to connect with your customers on a higher level.
- Offer your audience more than memes of kittens but aim to deliver them value; content that has a positive impact, interact with them, and invest the time to use social media correctly.
- Remember your audience wants to talk to real people, whether that's your business or you as a person, and that faceless social media won't cut it.
- When it comes to social media, being social is key. Engaging with your audience lets them know you are real, you have a pulse, feelings, emotions. These human traits make a huge difference when it comes to building a relationship and trust.
- The more engaged your audience is, the more exposure your posts will get which will help you develop more meaningful relationships.
- Adopt the SMART framework when it comes to achieving your social media goals.

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*“Successful social media marketing
is not built on impressions. It is
built on relationships”*

Kim Garst

Each person is unique, with challenges and pain points they wish to overcome in their personal or professional life – or both.

As we move into a world that is becoming even more digital as the days go by, we're finding that some traditional approaches to marketing are no longer fit for purpose.

From my experience as a marketer of 15 years, this book is designed to help you overcome the challenges that face us as human beings in the digital world we now live in.

Writing from my perspective, I will share my approach for human-to-human interaction in a professional setting; from social selling to account based marketing, to crafting compelling content and navigating social media channels to optimise their output to benefit you and your business. Everything is based upon results - it's all tried and tested, and has led to healthy pipelines and return on investment in the millions.

This book isn't just for fellow marketers and sales professionals. It's for anyone who wants to cut through the noise and have a true relationship with their audience.

I hope it brings value and insight into your world.