



TELL, DON'T SELL.

Tips to help you
navigate the shiny new
world of Social Selling!



Contents

Social media has invaded the modern sales process.	01
Smile! You're on...line.	02
Why social selling?	03
How do you start?	06
Tips to get it right	07
Ready to add Social Selling to your Employee Advocacy Program?	11
Conclusion	12

Social media has invaded the modern sales process.

According to the Aberdeen Group, 72.6% of sales executives who leverage social selling as part of the sales process outperform their peers, besides exceeding their targets 23% of the time.

The figures speak for themselves. Way back in 2014, an IDC survey had found that 75% of B2B buyers – and 84% of C-suite professionals – actively leveraged social media during the course of considering purchase decisions.



What's more, it found that social buyers made larger, more frequent purchases (they spent 84% more per purchase and executed 61% more buying decisions) than those who weren't active on social channels.

Source: Forbes, 3 Ways Social Selling Can Supercharge Your Sales Team

Over the years, thanks to the proliferation of social media platforms, business decision makers have only become even more socially active while identifying, evaluating, comparing, and selecting from the best options that they have access to. In fact, B2B buyers are no longer receptive to cold calls and other traditional sales techniques.

It's come as no surprise that sales processes are migrating to social networks. With the way social networks have triggered disruptions across industries, sitting it out has never been an option – thus, in 2016, LinkedIn discovered that 90% of top sales executives and 71% of all sales professionals leverage social media in their sales strategy.

Another LinkedIn study revealed that cold calls were in fact the least effective technique to attract the attention of B2B buyers, with merely 4% of these buyers indicating that they would consider a sales executive who reached out cold in a favorable light. On the other hand, an overwhelming 87% indicated that they would consider a salesperson introduced via professional networks favorably.

Smile! You're on... line.

Having already passed its bug-under-a-microscope stage, social media is now part of everyday life for nearly everyone. And therein lies the problem. Having realized the unmatched reach of social media, sales teams the world over are trying to find new ways to leverage it for better results.

The truth is, how powerful social selling is depends entirely on how smartly you use its various channels to reach your varied audiences.

To simplify things, let's quickly recap what exactly social selling is.

Social selling is the use of social media by sales teams to connect with, engage, and retain existing as well as prospective customers by focusing on building strong, long-term, meaningful relationships based on trust and value.

Every time you log in to LinkedIn to search for new leads or tweet about an industry development, you're leveraging social selling.

Why social selling?

Social selling is increasingly being regarded as much more than an attractive addition to a larger sales strategy – it's becoming entwined with every part of selling, starting with research and going all the way up to customer support.



The key difference between social selling and conventional sales strategies is that the former emphasizes on fostering and sustaining great relationships, while the latter focuses on achieving immediate, short-term results, albeit with the exception of brilliant sales people.

Here are a few reasons for B2B sales teams to leverage social selling:

1. It makes sense to be present where your customers are.

Ever heard of the saying “Out of sight, out of mind?” Well, it’s true. If your competitors are online and you aren’t, what are the chances that your customers will remember you for long? Not great.

What’s more, we all know that about 67% of the average buyer’s journey is digital, with many of them reading at least five articles online before making a purchase. Today’s customers are hyper-connected and super-informed – so if you’re part of your customers’ digital world, you’ve already won half your marketing battle.



2. You can’t beat personalized contact and engagement.

Social selling helps you foster meaningful relationships with your target audience via specific interactions. And when these interactions happen on a regular basis, it’s the beginning of sustained, solid relationships grounded in trust.

Thus, you’re consistently engaging your buyer personas, working toward long-term customer loyalty. In fact, it’s a known fact that social sellers achieve better results than sellers who don’t leverage social sales.

The best part? During the course of creating an online presence, brands can stake out a niche for themselves, differentiating themselves from the rest of the competition in the industry – and in the process establishing thought leadership.

3. Top of mind recall doesn't get much better than this.

Social selling provides you with the opportunity to get your foot in the door at every stage of the sales funnel by participating in - and maneuvering - the buyer's conversation as it happens. By offering a platform for brands to interact with customers in real time, social selling affords them the opportunity to communicate with customers at the right place and time, and in the right way.

As a marketing strategy, it's proved invaluable – it helps you generate, nurture, convert, and support leads, transforming the way sales take place. The results are there to see - Gartner research has found that **83%** of the customers that it surveyed admitted to accessing digital channels even in the later stages of purchases.

It's time to capitalize on social selling.



How do you start?

Contrary to how the term sounds, social selling isn't about shouting out your offerings from the rooftop. It's actually about handing out lifelines and helping your customers find their way to you – on their own. Or, simply put, **it's about building and nurturing relationships and winning trust** by offering value in the form of rich, insightful content that helps solve customer challenges.

The simplest way to do this is to remind your sales team to never give in to the urge to do a hard sell, no matter how sorely tempted they are.

Here's an easy, five-step plan your team can use to get started with social selling:



Tips to get it right

The best part about social selling is that it's a two-way street – while your sales team can definitely achieve their professional targets much easier and faster, they also benefit from amplified personal branding. This in turn means that you may not have to do much to motivate your team to leverage social selling. However, you do need to establish a framework to ensure effectiveness.

Here are a few tips to help:

1. Define a simple yet robust social media policy.

An effective social media policy ensures a disciplined approach while leveraging an inherently volatile medium, minimizing the possibility of committing mortifying faux pas or triggering blatant conflagrations.

What's more, not all company content is meant to be shared. A social media policy helps control / prevent sharing of certain information by ensuring a structured process to social sharing via employees. To learn more about how to draft an effective social media policy, [click here](#).

2. Ensure alignment with your brand culture.

All social content should be 100% compliant with your company and brand culture. Anything that isn't will make employees uncomfortable about sharing, which means that interactions wouldn't be genuine. Kind of counter-productive to the whole exercise, isn't it?



Social selling, though exciting and fun, must follow a well-planned approach.



3. Loop in your marketing team for relevant content.

Any social selling should be in line with your overall marketing strategy. Your marketing team should curate relevant, strategic, and pre-approved content that can safely be shared by company employees. This also ensures that social media activity is streamlined and consistent across the organization.

4. Stay informed.

The whole point of social selling is to build meaningful relationships with customers. The start of a meaningful relationship is through the sharing of meaningful information and insights.

Social channels are powerful tools for both – gaining valuable information as well as sharing it. In this case, they should be used to stay on top of industry news and other relevant developments, such as changing customer preferences or competitor activity.



5. Be proactive as well as reactive.

The key to fostering effective, long-term relationships is sustained engagement. If you have a list of known customer queries, proactively create and share content that is tailored to answer those queries.

On the other hand, if a customer ever raises a query on social media, make sure that someone on your team responds to it. If it's a prospective customer, this becomes all the more critical - reacting promptly could make all the difference between closing a deal or losing a promising lead.

6. Build trust.

Social selling gives you the opportunity to initiate personal communication with customers. In turn, customers feel better interacting with a person rather than a decidedly more inanimate organization/brand.

To sustain the personal connect, it's vital that sales personnel personalize their posts by adding in their insights, views, or humor. This helps your brand stand out among competitors, while at the same time building customer trust.

7. Provide all necessary resources and tools.

The last thing your sales team needs is to sit down and start writing the content they have to share on your behalf. One, not all of them are writers, and two, even if they can get by, this is definitely not among their KRAs. Make their lives easier by sharing with them a sustained pipeline of ready-to-share content that's been curated by the marketing team beforehand.

Also offer them software and tools that help them share content simultaneously on multiple channels, instead of them having to tediously share each content piece separately on their various social channels.

8. Evaluate, adjust, repeat.

As with any business process, you need to constantly monitor social selling to ensure that it's achieving the desired results. If not, you need to analyze the metrics to narrow down on the ones that aren't doing well, and keep tweaking your plan to close the gap. And once you figure out the magic formula? Repeat it. However, remember that successful social selling programs are structured not to straightjacket, but to encourage.

The idea is to align the team's efforts with your company's long-term branding goals, using them as a base to analyze results. Stay away from micromanaging your team's day-to-day sharing activities at all costs, and instead focus on giving them the elbow room they need to naturally share what they want, however they deem it fit.



Ready to add Social Selling to your Employee Advocacy Program?

The SOCXO platform helps you power-up social selling. It can be set up to:

a. Fetch the right content for the right purpose, whether it's:

- Rich branded content for easy sharing and network conversations,
- Industry / category / competition-related content for evaluation and targeted conversations, or
- Focused training content for the learning and personal development of sales personnel

b. Define and set up teams as you'd like – for instance, by product / solution, geography, category, vertical, or scale, to name a few

c. Empower personal branding of sales personnel via great content that they can share on their networks, facilitating relevant conversations with rich content

d. Encourage healthy competition by setting up goals and points for specific actions, and rewarding achievements (this works like a loyalty program - for example, you can set up points for content sharing, traffic generated, engagement nurtured, etc.)





Conclusion

Even today, according to LinkedIn, a large number of companies are either reluctant to imbibe social selling, or are moving at a slow pace toward adopting it. Industry leaders and analysts predict that such companies will lag behind more responsive companies in the next 5–10 years.

As Jill Rowley, social selling evangelist and advisor, puts it, “The modern consumer is digitally driven, socially connected, and mobile empowered. Sales reps need to adapt or *be replaced*.” Tim Hughes, another social expert, echoes Rowley’s opinion on the importance of social media in selling: “In a digital world, your LinkedIn profile is a vital part of your sales tool kit.”

In other words, companies no longer have the luxury of sitting on the fence when it comes to social selling. It just isn’t an option anymore, particularly given the fact that the average digital customer spends a lot of time researching a product/ service online (particularly on social media) before even approaching sales personnel – therefore, it’d be criminal to not leverage this medium and make your case exactly the way you’d want your customers to see it as they start out on their journey towards you.



We'd be happy to help you understand how SOCXO can maximize the results of your Social Selling program.

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