

EBOOK SERIES

How to Use Digital Selling to Transform & Grow Your Organization

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In recent years there has been a huge buzz around social selling. Tipped as the future for sales professionals, its impact has been significant. Since its introduction, social selling has offered new ways for salespeople to research, approach and engage with prospects and enabled sales representatives using social media to have 3.6 times¹ more chance of meeting a decision maker. But what about the bigger picture?

For sales professionals and organizations alike, digital selling is emerging as a new and increasingly exciting concept. As the father of social selling (in the sense that social selling makes up just one piece of the overall digital sales process pie), digital selling has enormous potential to transform a team or organization into a lean, mean selling machine.

How should we approach the concept of digital selling?

Think about digital marketing in today's world. We don't say 'social marketing' because we use more than just social media platforms to reach and engage with our target audience. Digital marketing encompasses a huge range of elements including PPC, SEO, analytics, mobile, email, display and the rest, to build brand awareness.

In much the same way, digital selling is about using a variety of tools and processes alongside social media platforms (social selling), to sell and ultimately drive revenue. We need to investigate the concept of digital selling to see how it can be utilized by sales professionals in addition to social selling to enhance engagement and drive sales.



By 2020, it is estimated that customers will manage 85% of their relationships with an organization without interacting with a human.

– Sales for Life

Traditional vs. digital selling

For traditional selling, sales professionals relied on lists that were purchased and generally included unqualified data. When engaging, contact was made using cold calling followed by making an appointment which forced targets into a sales cycle using scripted selling that often involved a lack of listening.

In comparison, a digital or social seller can use online technologies and networks to listen and share so they can engage prospects, cast a wide net to build relationships, nurture relationships easily and quickly along with understanding the challenges and issues a prospect may face and be able to support them to find solutions.

When it comes to high-quality leads, digital tools and capabilities can generate significant cost savings in the process. Organizations that adopt digital marketing tactics enjoy a Cost-Per-Lead that's 61% lower² than those that use a traditional outbound marketing approach.

While the sales industry may think of social selling as a useful tactic for inbound and/or outbound sales positions, the reality is that it can be used in every sales role. When part of the bigger picture that is digital selling, it can be used to deepen existing relationships with customers, gain new insights and establish new relationships.

What's involved in digital selling?

When we look at digital selling, it involves a range of strategies to create a well-oiled machine that works together to achieve one overall marketing goal. Any digital selling initiative requires a strategy that takes the various elements into account across the business that can transform and grow your sales team into proficient sellers that meet quotas and exceed targets. The following nine steps can help your organization create an effective digital selling strategy.

1) DIGITAL RESEARCH

Starting with a view of the customer, you need to research both digitally and socially to identify market trends and influencing factors affecting customers within your industry.

Digital research can enable sellers to identify and learn about potential customers and find out who and what influences your audience so you can develop a value proposition to increase your appeal to prospects. Ultimately research will help you to create more successful digital strategies.

There are four main components of digital research: Audience, Competitive, Cultural and Industry Trends.

- **Audience** – Narrowing an audience is very important to knowing who to target. By understanding what makes your customer tick you can engage with and influence them more effectively e.g. attitudes and behavior, goals, their life stage, other brands they follow, interests and motivations etc. This knowledge can be garnered through research tools using social media analytics, google analytics, social intelligence tools such as Affinio and Klear, search, surveys and consumer reports.

- **Competitive Research** – When examining competitors, it is important to evaluate their strategy, target audience and how effectively they reach their audience. Researching competitors can be done through:
 - Social media metrics – This involves using a tool such as Simply Measured which carries out social analysis and monitoring along with social attribution and API.
 - Social intelligence – Klear examines content, engagement and influential followers which Affinio compares competitors' audiences and categories brands focus on and excel in e.g. beauty bloggers, interior designers etc.
 - Content audits and analysis – This stage involves comparing a competitor's top content, their content mix (videos, infographics, blogs etc.), content strategy, paid vs. organic and content frequency.
 - Search news/videos, online article and case studies – Search engines can reveal most recent articles, news and interviews about a company.
 - Public records search – Tools such as YouGov will help segment customer types for competitor brands.
 - Industry trends - Trends have cultural implications and help identify disruptions, changes and advances in your industry through industry newsletters and publications, emerging technology resources, thought leaders and Google news alerts tailored to the content you want to hear about.

- **Cultural Research** – This stage involves looking at geographic influences, influential figures, language and memes along with historic and current news. An integral part of this is knowing who you are talking to and how to talk to them.

A photograph of four young people (three men and one woman) posing for a photo. They are all smiling and making playful gestures. The man on the far left is wearing a black cap and a black jacket, making a peace sign. The woman next to him is wearing a blue hat and a black jacket. The woman next to her has purple hair and is wearing green-rimmed glasses and a maroon jacket. The man on the far right has white hair and is wearing a grey beanie and a yellow shirt. They are all sitting on a metal grate. A teal text box is overlaid on the image.

Cultural research is an innovative, interdisciplinary field of research that investigates the ways in which 'culture' creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations and power

- UNC Cultural Studies Homepage

An example of this type of adaption is McDonald's in the use of their well-known slogan 'I'm lovin' it'. Used globally the slogan itself doesn't change but its message does dependent on the culture. In Switzerland the slogan is paired with an image of a woman relaxing:



While in India the same campaign is focused on family:



This difference is down to McDonald's researching culture to understand differences from one country to another and using those insights to connect with a specific audience.

2) SALES ENABLEMENT

With the modern buyer being digitally driven, socially connected and mobile empowered sales teams need to be where their buyers are. This can be achieved through content, training, analytics and insight. With 75% of B2B buyers³ using social media to be more informed, the buyer process has changed. Sales enablement needs to be integrated to ensure:

- **Alignment** – Content is aligned with the sales conversations reps are having
- **Awareness** – Develop content that can be used at every stage of the process and ensure sales professionals use it
- **Access** – Make content easy to access and ensure there is a process in place to notify them about new collateral
- **Analytics** – Aside from measuring revenue, look into sales training and content utilization

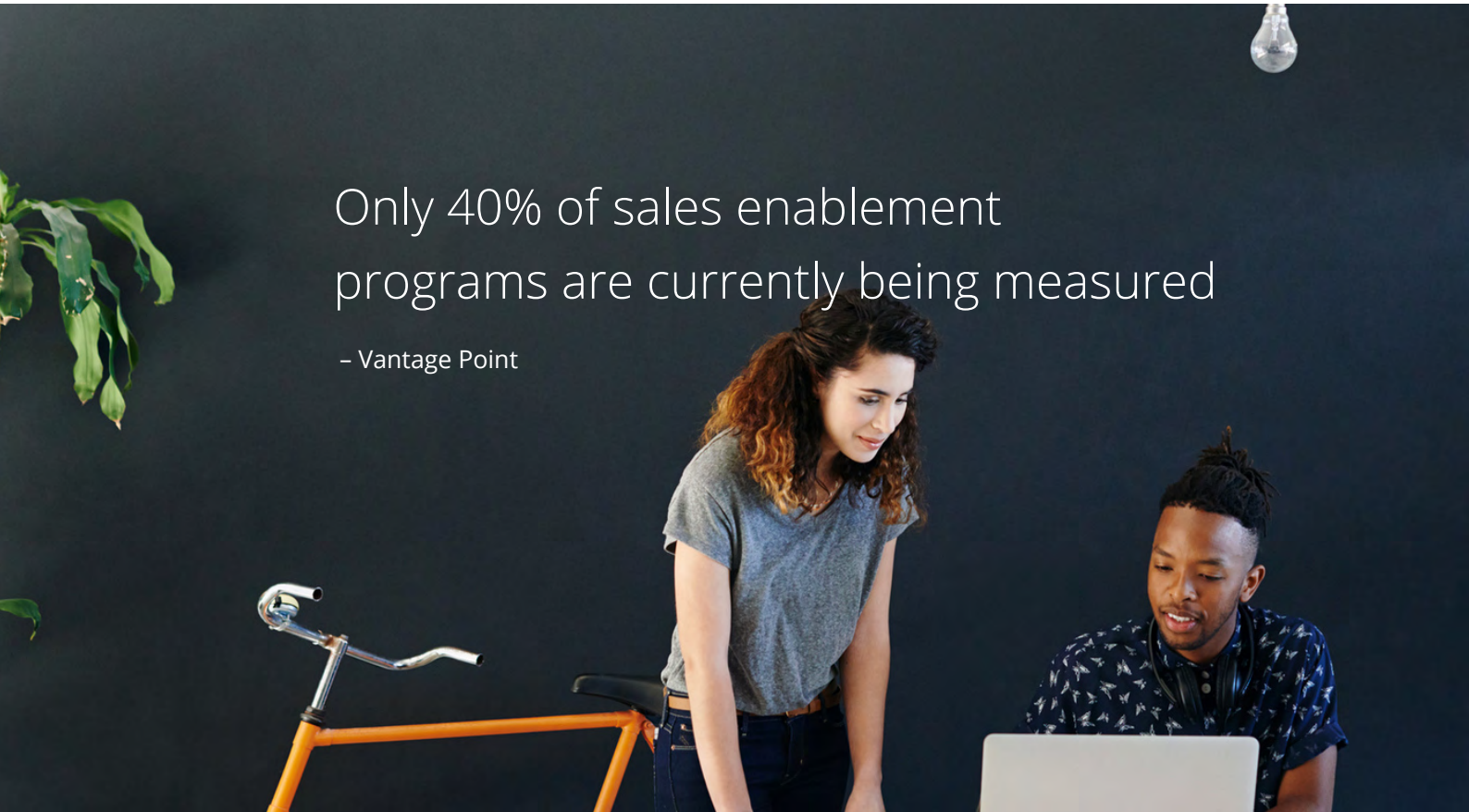
Sales enablement tools increase efficiency and productivity by collecting data and insights, sourcing the relevant individuals and the right information, building awareness and ensuring your company stays on the mind of prospects.

Examples of the most useful tools include MailChimp for e-mail campaigns, LinkedIn to raise a salesperson's profile and build credibility, Salesforce and Marketo for CRM and Survey Monkey to find out more about your customer.

Through analysis, you will understand how your prospects interact online and use predictive analysis to monitor your prospect's digital footprint. Sales enablement lets a sales professional understand the target audience, establish themselves as a credible source of information, make connections through an extensive network and score leads.

3) CRM

Customer Relationship Management helps manage business relationships by tracking interactions and creating reports. Training in CRM has proven successful in understanding how new technology makes sales people's lives easier throughout the sales process. Used properly it is an integrated part of a working environment rather than an additional element that has to be maintained.

A woman with curly hair, wearing a grey t-shirt, is leaning over a man who is sitting at a desk and working on a laptop. The man is wearing a dark patterned shirt. They are in a modern office environment with a dark background. A potted plant is visible on the left, and a light bulb hangs from the ceiling on the right.

Only 40% of sales enablement programs are currently being measured

– Vantage Point

CASE STUDY

Schneider Electric



A \$20 billion global leader in energy management solutions across 120 countries, Schneider Electric underwent a changing business model and a number of mergers and acquisitions that created a fragmented business. To sustain its expansion, the company wanted to align the front office processes and enhance collaboration using a single CRM solution.

A global initiative, their aim of a new CRM was to improve process efficiency, cross-selling and collaboration across sales, marketing, customer service and quality management departments.

Using a CRM system enriched customer knowledge across the organization and enhanced collaboration on key business data interactions and sales methodology. It also simplified reporting to improve sales representative's day-to-day activity and identified key strategies and operational business indicators.

Schneider's future plans include extending its use of the CRM to empower its employees worldwide to connect with customers in new ways along with accelerating its switch to digital to drive its Internet of Things vision⁴.

"This project has already demonstrated a valuable ROI by increasing cross-selling and account coverage by more than 20% each and generating an impressive 70% adoption rate."

- Philippe Trichet, Senior VP of Customer Experience and CRM at Schneider Electric

4) SOCIAL CONTENT

This stage involves interacting and engaging with prospects through the leverage of social media channels and targeted social campaigns. The development of content is a four-pronged process:

- Create – The key stakeholders for content creation are your online community, industry influencers and 3rd party sources.
 - Online community - User generated content includes starting discussions on networks such as LinkedIn and Facebook is collaborative and hence more likely to be shared and engaged with.
 - Industry influencers – Use social media and social listening to pinpoint the right individuals who can then be reached out to by connecting with or sending a personalized message.
 - 3rd party sources - Targeting renowned publications in your industry with high-quality and relevant content will help raise your profile and the brand awareness of your organization.

“Content marketing produces 3 times more leads per each dollar spent”

- Kapost

Personalization is key to providing a personal touch by leveraging customer data and targeting messaging. For customers, personalized Calls-To-Actions result in a 42% higher conversion rate⁵ than generic ones. Evergreen content is often the most valuable as it remains relevant, drives traffic and can be repurposed into different formats. Examples include 'how-to' articles, tutorials, beginner guides and case studies.

- **Curate** – Content that is carefully selected can grow your authority and provide value to the right targets. Choosing the right channels is also important as selecting the ones that your prospects prefer helps cultivate engagement and allows you to tag influencers to encourage retweets and shares. The most effective content formats are relevant and insightful blog posts, customized email newsletters and social media. Key methods of content curation are RSS feeds, email notifications and social listening.
- **Distribute** – Blogs are an important way of positioning yourself as a thought leader and provide a good way to convert leads with clever CTA's. On average companies with blogs produce 67% more leads per month⁶. Writing on a relevant topic with evergreen content that is mapped to customer data will go a long way to encouraging engagement through sharing or comments. To get the most from your content, create a strategy that includes scheduling, optimization through adding images and analytics to inform future blogs/articles etc.
- **Strategize** – A successful content strategy integrates with the overall sales process. Aim to create content related to your digital selling goals and produce content that will complement sales collateral. Above all ensure your customer is at the core!

CASE STUDY

AT&T



Multinational telecommunications company AT&T wanted to capitalize on digital by re-establishing its relationship with a key client - a Fortune 100 company. While social media has proven to be a successful route for many companies, AT&T decided to use a content strategy that was specifically targeted at the people they wanted to re-engage with.

By developing a B2B blog entitled Networking Exchange they highlighted content that was of interest to tech-minded companies through topics such as security resources, leadership, cloud computing and mobile business technologies.

Along with relevant content, the articles included links that directed readers to their sales pages to drive traffic and aid conversions through social media platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn.

Alongside their digital strategy, AT&T trained their sales team and provided internal support. As a result, they converted \$47 million⁷ in brand new business in just 18 months, all of which they attribute to their social media strategy.

5) DIGITAL SALES MESSAGING

This involves optimizing the sales message to suit the needs and desires of your target consumers. A well-written sales message should be personalized, short, relevant, relatable and have a strong call-to-action. In addition, the content should enhance communications so customers can understand the message. This includes focusing on an active voice and strong verbs, avoiding wordiness and focusing on positive forms that provide solutions.

Channel selection also plays a huge role dependent on the audience you want to reach i.e. B2B or B2C. Knowing that LinkedIn reaches a B2B audience better while Twitter is suitable for both target audiences will help ensure the spread of your sales message.

Storytelling is also key to brands as it helps connect with potential buyers, communicates benefits and creates sales opportunities. A good story should evoke empathy, have an outcome and address customer needs.



TOMS Shoes set up a decade ago based on the innovative business model of donating a pair of shoes once a pair is bought.

Their annual campaign 'One Day Without Shoes' held in May encourages people to go barefoot for a day in order to raise awareness for children's health and education in countries such as Peru and India. Using social media the company spread their story and encouraged people to tag photos of bare feet on Instagram which would result in a pair of shoes being donated. This year alone 27,435 children across 10 countries received new shoes as a result.

This use of social entrepreneurship that aims to make the world a better place or as TOMS Shoes' mantra conveys – 'Our dream is that some day, all kids will have shoes' - has grown the company into a formidable brand with a reputation for giving back.

At the moment the company is focusing on relaying their story through in-store displays using VR headsets so people see the children that they're helping in countries like Peru and Colombia to tell their story more and not take it for granted that people already know it.

6) ENGAGEMENT

Digital engagement is about building genuine relationships and its success requires a strong profile online and the right tools to create content, generate leads, conduct customer research and measure engagement. Its frequency depends on value, engagement methods, time, format and resources.

When making initial contact do your research and craft a message before engaging. The four ways to nurture customers are by a welcome, educate, differentiate and accelerate through decision tools such as LinkedIn and Skype. Buying signals are important cues to pick up on such as price queries, details of the service and delivery dates.

The range of digital engagement channels are broad and include social media, forums, live chat, stream, email and mobile apps to name a few. When choosing channels focus on where the value is and spend time and resources on higher value contacts. An influencer strategy can help build your network and increase the reach and awareness of your products/services.

For that all-important close, clear communication is vital. Leverage the many digital selling applications to shorten lead times and assist with the close. Going forward, measure your engagement and use insights to improve the engagement strategy.

7) SOCIAL ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

Social Account Management (SAM) focuses on using the post-sale process to manage accounts socially and digitally to leverage cross-selling and up-selling opportunities.

The channels used are social, educational and online and offline meetings that keep customer relationships active through insights and relevant information. Social media channels are perfect for this alongside webinars, podcasts, live streams and online groups and gatherings.

Digital brand management involves maintaining your position as a provider of quality products and services and being known for actively engaging customers and an ability to offer valuable and relevant content online. A part of this is managing a crisis in order to protect your brand in the instance of a social media incident. An effective strategy involves:

- Creating guidelines for identifying the type of magnitude of a crisis
- Role and responsibilities for all departments
- An internal communications plan
- Up-to-date contact information for critical employees
- Approval processes for social media postings
- Pre-approved external messaging, images etc.
- A copy of the company-wide social media policy

8) DIGITAL SALES LEADERSHIP

With digital transformation now a necessity for any organization wanting to compete in the digital landscape, leadership is essential. When it comes to digital selling there are four key elements to ensuring your digital selling strategy gets off the ground and goes on to thrive to drive sales and revenue.

These include:

Strategy – Establish a digital selling strategy that supports the business goals and objectives of your organization. Often, digital strategies fail due to the mismatch between business and digital directions. The key to this is to assess the digital maturity of your organization in the first instance, assess competitors and match your digital selling objectives with those of the company.

Executive Sponsor - The role of an executive sponsor is to ensure the project's goals are aligned with overall company strategy. In addition, a sponsor should provide support (and combat resistance) from other senior executives, and provide ongoing direction as the effort unfolds.

Motivate by Example – To build an effective and empowered digital selling team, a leader needs to set an example by establishing a digital presence. Cultivating a persuasive personal brand will help cement you as a thought leader by personalizing engagement with current and future networks.

Assess & Train - Assessing the digital knowledge of your team can be achieved through an external digital diagnostic tool. By identifying the gaps in a team's skillset you can take measures to fill those gaps through training and development initiatives that will deliver ongoing training as you build out and shape your program.

9) STRATEGY & INTEGRATION

The transition from a traditional sales strategy to one that's digital is a stepped process. Made up of four stages - experimentation, evangelism, formalization and realization - it is an extension of the core business strategy and not only keeps costs down but supports business scale and reach. In essence, strategy and integration ensure all of your businesses digital marketing strategies interlink and are in continuous alignment.

While digital research helps build a picture of markets, customers and competitors. Analysis tools, digital competitor and territory analysis gain insight about potential customers and will help you find and follow influencers and territories.

All of these elements will help inform a digital sales strategy which can be measured to track results, report on ROI and gain further support on an organization-wide level. The key to a digital strategy is to continuously tweak it to ensure your strategy evolves as your business does.

Conclusion

Digital selling is evolving all the time. Essentially, it's the process of engaging online, as well as utilizing all the digital sales tools at your disposal to drive more sales opportunities.

Now a critical part of any sales process, digital selling involves creating an organizational structure around your content, as well as an ecosystem to measure the content consumption of your audience. It includes more than just using social assets to build brand awareness and make sales.

By leveraging all of the digital assets available and using them in an intelligent way, your organization stands a real chance of making a mark with potential partners and customers alike. Interested in leading your sales team to digital selling success?

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