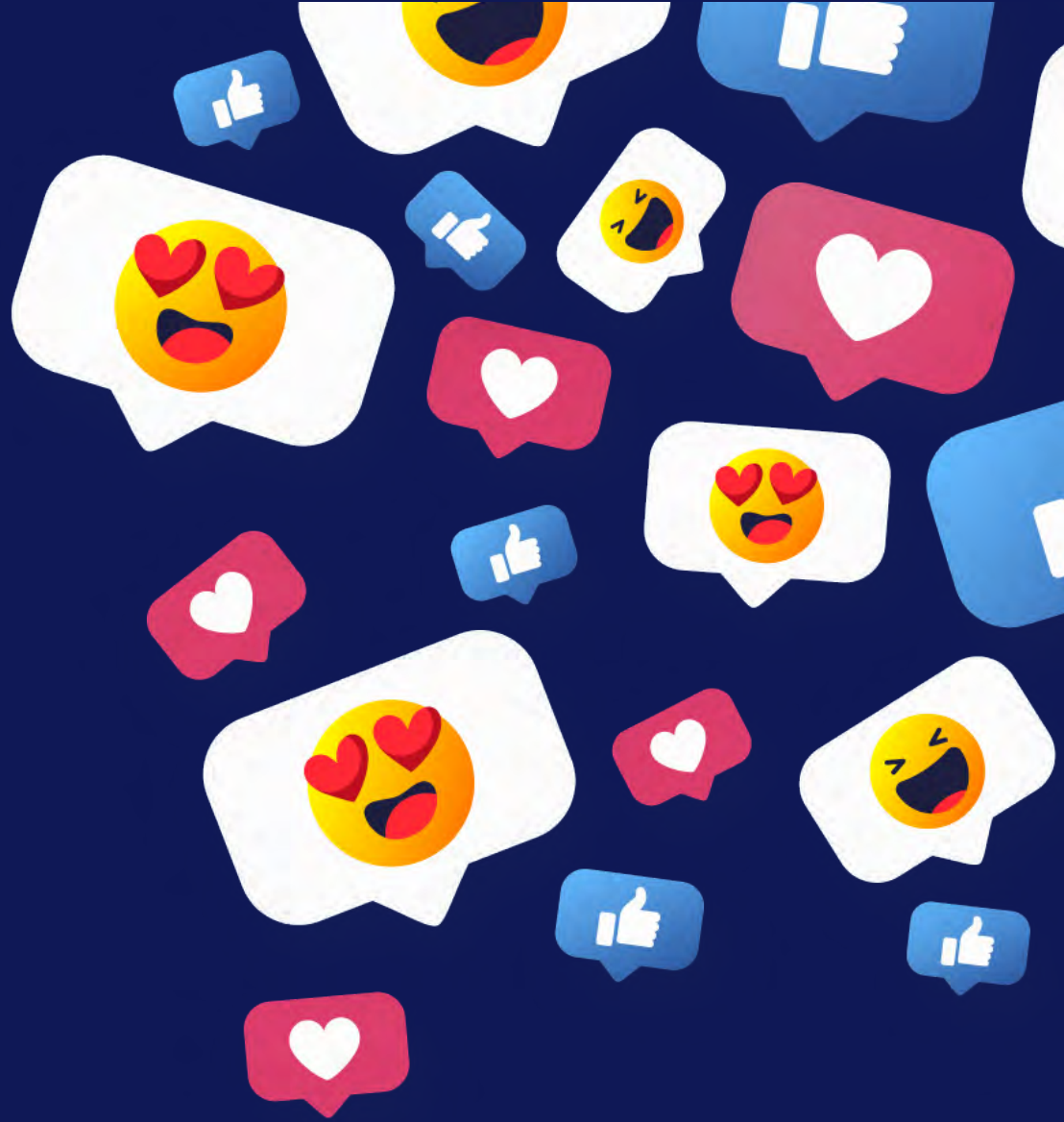




Digital
Marketing
Institute



HOW TO

Achieve Social Selling Success

Build Relationships, Establish Trust and Drive Sales



Introduction

Social selling has given the sales process a whole new dimension. With social media channels providing a direct and immediate line to potential customers, sellers can develop meaningful customer relationships, establish trust, and ultimately drive sales.

As a sales professional, relying on traditional marketing is no longer enough to guarantee success.

With 3.8 billion social media users globally
consumers are now five times more reliant
on digital content than they were in the early
2000's.

The knock-on effect of consumers spending more time online (did you know? The average user spends three hours on social media per day) is that their buying behavior has changed. While it was once common practice to engage with a salesperson at the start of the buying process, many customers now perform their own research online before going anywhere near a sales representative.

In fact, things have changed to such a degree, studies show that that social media platforms have an influence of 74% of consumer buying decisions, with **81%** of respondents admitting that they've made a purchase based on a friend's posts or content.

The impact? Consumers are becoming increasingly empowered about the buying process and are less inclined to seek out sales



However, this news should not make sales professionals despair. Today's customer reliance on, and indeed faith in, digital networks presents a wealth of new sales opportunities. These opportunities are most apparent in those sellers that are active on social media and already using it effectively as a tool. In fact, a LinkedIn study on social selling revealed:

89% of top-performing salespeople state that social networking platforms are vital in closing deals and are an integral part of their sales strategy

At the same time, when it came to exceeding quotas, social media users were 64% more successful than their non-social media selling peers.

The bottom line here? By using social media networks as prospecting tools, interactions can turn into leads and leads into customers.

To achieve this with some measure of success, there are a number of things to consider when kick-starting your digital selling career or looking to boost a burgeoning one on the cusp of digital domination.



Consider All Social Media Networks In Your Sales Strategy

The beauty of social media is its popularity and accessibility. For an engaged social seller, channels such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram provide an opportunity to connect with customers early in the sales cycle to generate leads and build trust.

As the business-orientated social network, with over [700+ million](#) users, LinkedIn is often seen as the place to turn for salespeople. However, this isn't always the case.

89% of businesses currently use Facebook for acquiring new customers, closely followed by LinkedIn (83%), YouTube (81%), Twitter (80%), and Instagram (56%)

These figures provide insight into the efficacy of the different social networks, but also emphasize the need to conduct research and consider all platforms as potential lead generators. These discoveries can be used to improve what you're doing and how you are doing it. After all, being social is about creating opportunities for interactions that can provide value to potential customers.

73% of marketers believe that social selling has proved 'somewhat effective' or 'very effective' to their business..



Invest In An Online Presence

Enhancing a digital selling strategy requires the cultivation of a persuasive personal brand. An online appearance is just as important as how you look when turning up to meet a client, if not more so in today's climate. Presenting yourself as an authentic and well-informed influencer, will help promote positive customer relationships to drive sales and encourage repeat purchases.

Alongside a professional photograph, the story that you weave online is important. Customers want to know who you are, what you do and how you can help them. As the lead in any profile, be that Twitter or LinkedIn, a biography should be well crafted and informative while conveying how you and your business are the perfect fit for prospects.

An essential part of building an online presence is credibility. Each interaction across social networks should help enhance your personal brand and create a solid foundation from which to work. Consider creating networks and connections that enable you to share insights into your industry or provide solutions to challenges a customer may face. These types of relationships can prove invaluable in establishing your online presence and will serve to demonstrate expert knowledge and build trust. And in a time where consumers value brands that are not only transparent but have mirroring values to their own, building trust through social media is paramount.



Also—and this is important—you should never underestimate the power of influencers online. As revered social selling evangelist, Jill Rowley says: “These are the people your potential customers trust, the people they listen to, the people they learn from. Associating yourself with them not only increases your visibility; it increases your credibility too.” For salespeople, this strategy can add genuine value and create a network of potential customers that you can turn from cold leads to warm prospects.

Considering **90.4%** of Gen Zers, **77.4%** of Gen Xers, and **48.2%** of Baby Boomers actively use social media on a daily basis, creating head-turning, sales-boosting social media profiles should be a top priority.



Research Your Customers

One thing digital excels at is helping to build relationships. But it's important to remember these relationships are only as good as the time and effort a seller invests in them. By taking the time to identify and understand prospective customers on a deeper level while assessing key industry trends, drivers and influencing factors, a salesperson can gain invaluable insights into behavior and ultimately, influence sales.

Being informed enables you as a seller to better relate to and engage with existing leads while assessing the reputation of—and customer sentiment towards—your competitors. Ultimately, social selling is about being able to provide the right information to the right person at the right time using the right channel.

Luckily, there are a raft of tools and channels that can make this process easier and provide your sales strategy with the knowledge it needs to drive social selling success.

Owned Media

The ideal area to start when you are looking to gain a better understanding of a prospect or competitor. After all, company websites, social media profiles, blogs, and e-newsletters are the essence of a potential customer's identity and you can garner a lot about someone from how they present themselves online.



Industry Publications

Whether it's Mashable, VICE, People, Harvard Business Review or National Geographic, reading articles or publications relevant to your prospect or competitor will help you develop a more comprehensive understanding of the developments within their industry.

Forums And Groups

Quora, Flarum or Reddit are peer-to-peer discussion platforms that can give insights into particular pain points that companies and industries face, along with the successes. Similarly, LinkedIn and Facebook groups provide arenas for discussions on specific topics that could benefit your understanding of a potential customer or competitor.

Influencer Lists

Given the fact that **49%** of today's consumers rely on influencers to make purchasing decisions, digging a little deeper into this area will prove valuable. By researching lists of influencers in your niche or industry, you will gain a clearer understanding of who your prospects are looking to when it comes to buying decisions and the type of content that resonates with them most.

Social And Listening Tools

Social listening is an essential instrument in any digital seller's toolbox. For example, Buzzsumo lets you analyze top performing content based on industry, and identify competitors and influencers. Feedly and Google Alerts provide information on relevant blogs, company-specific and industry news in real-time, while Awario examines brand or industry mentions in social conversations.



For prospect identification, Tweepi can uncover social media users who may be interested in your brand. And, [Pulsar](#) will help you segment your audience effectively while tapping into niche discussions or topics related to your industry.

When used collectively, this perfect storm of insight tools will form a valuable and substantial part of your digital sales research.

90% of the selling could be over and done with by the time a salesperson gets involved.



Become A Valuable Contributor

The key to successful social selling is commitment. Once you have identified the right people and platform, it is essential that you consistently provide valuable contributions that resonate with the prospects you are trying to reach.

Share your expertise. Come up with solutions. Provide valuable insights that your customers would want such as white papers, research, videos, case studies, behind the scenes content, infographics, etc. In essence, you should motivate your customers to engage with you. Once you have piqued their interest, you can progress to sending more tailored, personal messages and follow up emails in an attempt to convert.

This doesn't necessarily mean you have to create new content all the time. By listening to what is being said and shared on your networks, you can engage with and respond to conversations — be that to a tweet, a video, Instagram Story, on a blog or in a forum — in a meaningful way. Reposts are also a great way to not only populate your networks, but they also allow you to interact with other social media users and create relationships that are mutually beneficial.

As a tactic, this can be particularly useful when it comes to the influencers you follow as they should provide the latest and most cutting-edge information when it comes to their area of expertise. By sharing their insights, you can piggy-back on their knowledge (just be sure to credit any posts or insights to the person that provided them) and establish yourself as a professional that knows what they're talking about.



In conclusion, engaging with prospects in the online realm can provide meaningful relationships and generate leads. By taking the elements described above into consideration and engaging with potential customers through social networks, the future of your selling could be that of a digital superstar.

“Before LinkedIn and other social networks, in the sales world, ABC stood for Always Be Closing. Now, it means Always Be Connecting.” — Jill Rowley



Learn How To Become A Digital Selling Superstar

Traditional selling methods are no longer enough to sustain success. Digital tools and techniques are now an essential component of any efficient selling strategy and are revolutionizing sales and prospecting.

The Digital Marketing Institute's certified Professional Diploma in Digital Selling is ideal for a wide variety of sales professionals and will equip you with the skills needed to drive more sales and increase earnings.

For more information on how the Digital Marketing Institute can help you, email us at info@digitalmarketinginstitute.com



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