

HOW TO ACHIEVE

SOCIAL SELLING SUCCESS

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS, ESTABLISH TRUST AND DRIVE SALES

Introduction

Social selling has added a new dimension to the sales process. 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 1.5 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 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 near a sales representative.

In fact, things have changed to such a degree, a Price Waterhouse Coopers global poll found that 78% of consumers were influenced by social media in some way, while nearly half said that reviews, comments and feedback on social media influenced their digital buying behavior.

As a result, consumers have become empowered when it comes the buying process and less inclined to seek out sales representatives.

But, this news should not make sales professionals despair. Customer reliance on and 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. Research by social sales specialist and author, Jim Kennan revealed that:

**78% of sales people using social media
outsold those that were not using it.**

While when it came to exceeding quotas, social media users were 23% more successful than their non-social media selling peers.

The learning in this is that 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, Google+ and Twitter 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 364 million users, LinkedIn is often seen as the place to turn for salespeople. However, this isn't always the case.

An infographic by [Quota Deck](#) found that 77% of companies acquired customers through Facebook, while a [KiteDesk sales](#) survey found Twitter ranked more valuable than LinkedIn when it came to sales prospecting.

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 learnings can then 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.

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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. 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 from. Consider creating networks and connections that enable you to share insights into your industry or provide solutions to challenges a customer may face. These type of relationships can be invaluable in establishing your online presence and will serve to demonstrate expert knowledge and build trust.

Most importantly, don't underestimate the power of influencers online. As 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.

After all, with [Forrester](#) reporting that by the time a salesperson gets involved in the buying process 90% of the selling could be over and done with, a profile that gets noticed can only help in the sales process.

Research your customers

One thing digital excels at is helping to build relationships. However, those relationships are only as good as the time and effort a seller puts into them. By taking the time to identify and learn about customers along with assessing key industry trends, drivers and influencing factors, a salesperson can gain insights into behavior and understand the driving factors that influence.

Being informed enables you as a seller to better relate to and engage with existing leads, along with assessing the reputation of and sentiment towards your competitors. Ultimately, it's 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 place 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, Harvard Business Review or National Geographic, reading articles or publications relevant to your prospect or competitor will help develop a more comprehensive understanding of the developments within their industry.

FORUMS AND GROUPS

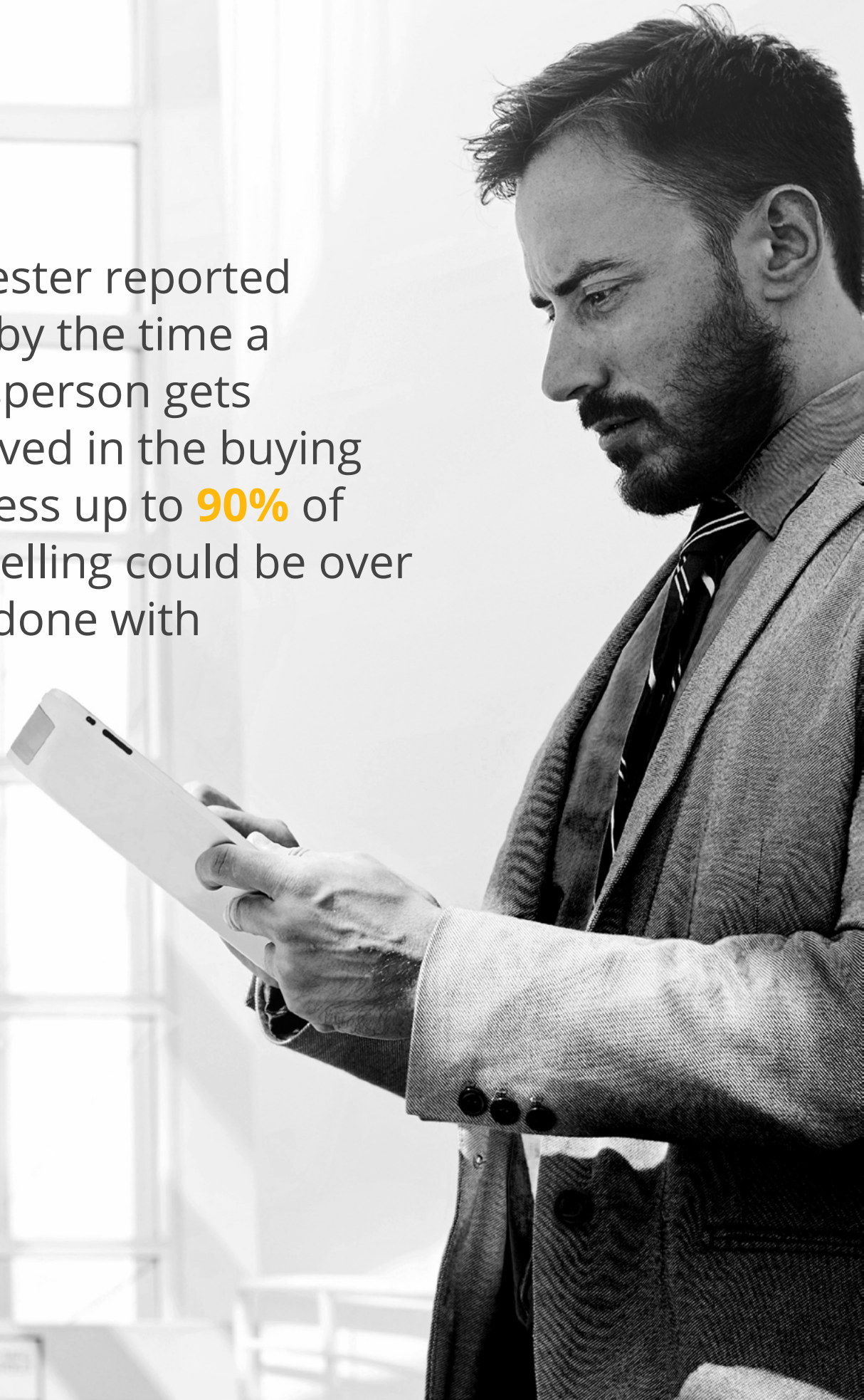
Quora or Reddit are peer-to-peer discussion platforms that can give insights into particular pain points that companies and industries face, along with the successes. Similarly, LinkedIn and Facebook groups provide arenas for discussions on specific topics that could benefit your understanding of a potential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

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, identify competitors and influencers. Feedly and Google Alerts provide information on relevant blogs, company-specific and industry news in real-time while Topsy examines brand mentions in social conversations. For prospect identification, Tweepi can uncover social media users who may be interested in your brand.

When used collectively, these insights can form a valuable and substantial part of your digital sales research.

Forrester reported that by the time a salesperson gets involved in the buying process up to **90%** of the selling could be over and done with



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, infographics etc. In essence, 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, on a blog or in a forum - in a meaningful way. Reposts are also a great way to not only populate your networks, but 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 accredit 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.

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

