



# SOCIAL SELLING

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## *Organizations must provide tools, platforms and strategies to promote social selling among the sales force.*

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In the last past decades' sales have noticed the importance of social media in the contemporary business to business selling market. Social media play an important role in the sales management as the digital era take advance and become a way to do business worldwide. Social media has grown into a central tool for B2B salespeople to identify leads, understand buyers, embrace relationships, and start building a personal brand through the systematic presence, sharing and engaging content through digital platforms (Agnihotri, Mani, Chaker, Daugherty, & Kothandaraman, 2020).

Many sales representative have accepted social selling as a strategic approach to reach organic visibility among customers, building leadership relations and driving revenues. Even traditional industrial firms are using social media strategies and investing in technological platforms to increase the effective use of social media (Moncrief,

2017). Recent literature has notice the importance of social media in B2B selling from both perspectives, the individual salesperson, and organizational (Guenzi & Nijssen, 2020). This studies lead to reinforce the clear evidence about outcomes of using social media in B2B selling. The use of social media in selling has been mentioned as any social interaction using technology that can be deployed by sales professionals to generate content (e.g. blogs, microblogs, and wikis) and to develop networks such as social networks, online communities, etc (Agnihotri et al., 2020). Social media has an important role in selling, because is shaping communication between sellers and customers, and empowering customers' buying processes through the social touchpoints (Agnihotri, 2020).

### **Social media in sales**

In the field of sales, research indicates that social media

offers a variety of benefits for salespeople: help them to identify new leads, develop insights about customers and competitors, build contacts, and raise long term relationships (Bill, Feurer, & Klarmann, 2020). Generally, the use of social media has been found to improve salesperson selling performance and customer satisfaction.

Antecedent studies have examined both side in sales: the individual salesperson and sales organization factors. At the individual level, the salesforce capabilities related to: products and customers, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, commitment, learning goal orientation and positive attitudes towards social media, are all positively connected to social media use in selling (Bill, Feurer, & Klarmann, 2020).

At the organizational level, management can facilitate social media use through organizational social media commitment and competence by offering training and support, ensuring upper management support and providing a social media strategy (Bill, Feurer, & Klarmann, 2020). Generally, in larger firms or in those with

a structured salesforce, social media use in selling is more effective.

### Definition and key dimensions of social selling

Terho, H., Giovannetti, M., & Cardinali, S. (2022) define social selling as a salesperson selling approach which leverages social and digital channels for understanding, connecting with, and engaging influencers, prospects, and existing customers at relevant customer journey touchpoints for building valuable business relationships. Social selling is a three-dimensional construct with three formative dimensions of:

insight acquisition

connecting

engagement

The dimensions could be correlated, but they do not need to occur simultaneously, as a salesperson can score highly in the insight acquisition dimension but not in engagement. The social selling construct is determined by the contributions of its key dimensions (Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003).

The first dimension of social selling refers to the acquisition of insights into prospects, existing customers, and other relevant actors through social channels. This dimension is related with the opportunities of 'social listening' to monitor customers' conversations to develop a better understanding of the customers' needs, as well to identify sales opportunities from existing customers (Agnihotri, 2020).

The second dimension of social selling refers to connecting to prospects, existing customers, and other relevant actors through networking and consistent

interaction during the customer purchasing journey touchpoints (Agnihotri, 2020). This dimension highlights the role of social media in building and maintaining a network of personal contacts through consistent conversation: chatting, commenting, questioning, or answering relevant questions with the market into an active two-directional exchange (Bocconcelli et al., 2017).

The third dimension of social selling refers to the engagement of customers and other actors through valuable content (Ancillai et al., 2019). Precisely, by systematically sharing valuable content, salespersons can influence



customers' willing to invest resources, time and attention, creating common ground for a future relationship.

Nowadays, customers and buyers are highly informed and empowered, so, salespeople must capture their attention by providing relevant, timely, and valuable content that addresses substantial customer business problems or drives interaction (Bocconcelli et al., 2017).

To summarize, is important to highlight that insight generation activities are related to aspects of using social media in identifying and qualifying prospects and sales opportunities as well as understanding customer organizations, stakeholders, and customer needs. In turn, connecting activities refers to the efforts for creating professional connections and networking with relevant stakeholders, as well as maintaining the created relationships with active interaction in social media.

To close, the engagement of relevant audiences refers to efforts to systematically share helpful and valuable content to keep the market involved (Terho, et al., 2022).

It is undeniable that salesperson social selling has a positive relationship to selling performance. Thus, organizations must provide tools, platforms and strategies to promote social selling among the salesforce. Social selling can drive salesperson outcome performance, mainly by helping salespersons to attain the position of trusted advisor as well as by helping in customer acquisition rather than customer retention.

Therefore, managers can effectively drive salespersons' social selling by investing in a social media strategy with social media goals and social media activities for sales team. Additionally, salespeople need to have access to relevant social media sales tools, that is, technologies that helps to build insights on prospects and customers; to access and share content; to manage social media activities across different channels. Is also relevant to notice that normally, the salesperson's customer orientation is not driving for social selling.

Instead, sales technology orientation represents the primary orientation behind social selling activities.

Organizations should, invest in developing and maximizing a positive relationship with technology among their sales team (Terho, et al., 2022).

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- The goal of creating a content marketing strategy should always be the original one, the one of creating and distributing valuable and compelling content to attract, conquer and engage a certain target audience, clearly defined and understood, with the aim of driving consumers to profitable actions (Pulizzi, 2013).