

Your Guide to Social Selling



Sales has changed

Sales and marketing techniques need to adapt to our digital and social age. Tech has changed the very products we sell as well as the way we work. Smartphones in particular has changed our behaviour in terms of how we communicate, share experiences, leave reviews, do our shopping, look for information and, ultimately, find businesses.

Buyers are self-informed by the time they engage with a salesperson with 88% of consumers researching before they buy, consulting an average of 10 sources. Because the consumer is far more informed when they make a purchasing decision than a few years ago, the role of the sales person has changed and the process of closing a sale is far further along the customer journey than before.

In fact, 70% of the buyer journey is now complete before the salesperson engages with a customer. They've already researched solutions to their problems, your products and services, and your business online before they begin to think about purchasing from you.

Online Reviews

Online reviews are becoming increasingly important with 90% of consumers reading online reviews before visiting a business (with 40% suggesting they only need to read between 1-3 reviews).

If you can encourage your previous clients to leave reviews on the channel that is most important in your digital strategy, whether that's a Trustpilot, Google or Facebook review, you'll create a positive impression for any prospective buyer, leading them further along the sales journey.

A good Trustpilot review will impact your star rating alongside your Google listing and could mean 17% more website traffic with the increased click through rate (Google Seller Ratings are based on an average of scores from their list of trusted online review sites - one of which is Trustpilot).

Reviews and testimonials are great at building trust = recommendations make great touch points.



The B2B Buyers Journey

In the B2B sector a sales prospect requires on average 6-8 touch-points before they are considered a viable sales lead.

Those touch points could take a variety of forms but typically, the journey might look something like this. A prospect sees...

- A LinkedIn post about the benefits of an iPECS phone system
- A Facebook post of your team winning an award at the Pragma Conference
- A LinkedIn article about a case study of a client you worked with
- A tweet linking to a blog post about the end of ISDN
- An infographic about the money saved by using call analytics and reporting
- An e-book download about the future of cloud phone systems
- A LinkedIn connection request from a member of the sales team after downloading the e-book from your website
- A Facebook advert for a free consultation they saw as the result of a retargeting campaign to your website visitors



There is a huge opportunity here to create those touch points and make an impact on your prospect, building trust and credibility. Depending on how long your customer journey is will depend on how long it takes for your prospect to take you up on that free consultation or call your sales team. But converting an inbound lead will inevitably be easier than an outbound one.

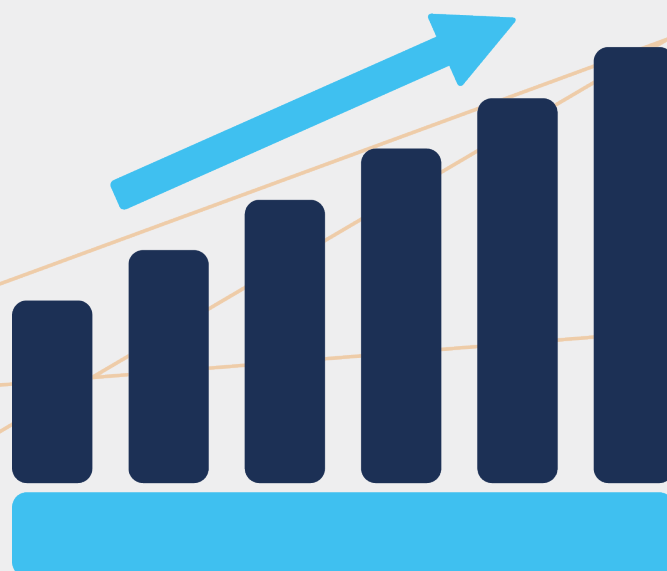
The truth is, if you're not doing this, someone else is.

So if we look at the traditional sales funnel we can see what that journey looks like. If a potential buyer is already evaluating the competition and you haven't been part of that journey, it's going to be hard work to win someone over when they've spent the last few weeks or months listening to one of your competitors who has been busy building a relationship with them.

Digital must be part of the mix if you don't want to get left behind. Start making it work for you and generating more inbound leads. The next few years are key to your sales and marketing evolving to work with new technologies in all areas of business.

How do we adapt our sales approach to the digital age?

Content marketing rose in popularity with the need to be discoverable in search, engaging on social, and trusted enough to create affinity and loyalty. It's about adding value to the discovery process rather than interrupting it.

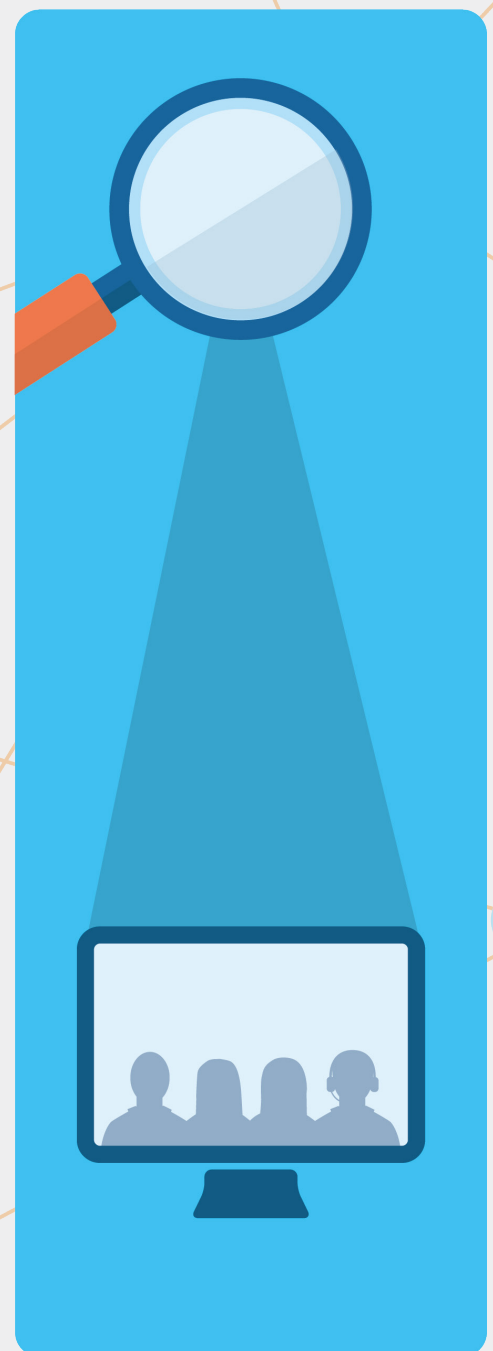


5 Steps to a Successful Social Selling Strategy

We want to adopt a strategic approach to sales and marketing focused on creating and distributing valuable content to attract and retain your target audience - and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.

There are unique considerations in the social selling process. Firstly, individuals have control - they are not obliged to follow you on social. People are in charge of their own social media experience. And that means that sales and marketing professionals need to be creative in order to be seen, to gain trust from their prospects and make an impact on them.

- 1. Identify buyer personas and connect with them**
- 2. Plan and create relevant content**
- 3. Distribute and optimise content**
- 4. Monitor and engage**
- 5. Measure and learn**




Buyer Personas

Developing a buyer persona is a fundamental part of any social strategy because this not only defines who you are talking to but where to find them, how best to communicate with them and what content you can share that will engage them and keep the sales funnel full of prospects.

In particular, understanding their challenges, pain points and the responsibilities of their role will help you craft engaging social content to turn them into a qualified lead.

PERSONA PROFILE

 NAME	HOW THEY FIND US	PAIN POINTS
AGE	WHAT THEY WANT TO KNOW	WHAT THEY DON'T WANT
JOB TITLE	WHO ARE THEY?	WHAT ARE THEIR VALUES?
LOCATION	GOALS & ASPIRATIONS	WHY THEY BUY FROM US

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When you've identified your buyer personas, connect with them on social. Use LinkedIn advanced search to find prospects based on their job title, sector and location. Or try searching on Twitter and creating a Twitter list to organise these prospects in one place and make it easy to follow their tweets and engage with them when relevant.

Plan and create relevant content

There is a lot of noise to cut through on social and this can sometimes be a barrier to a business's social efforts. However, one approach is that if you can disrupt the status quo and make your prospective buyer feel they are getting left behind then you will get their attention. If your content can make them feel uneasy or worried that they're missing out while also providing some helpful or valuable content, advice or opinion, you will make them stop and think and, more importantly, listen to you and start to cement your relationship as a client and trusted advisor.

Building trust is an essential part of the sales process in the B2B sector. Whether that be by showing you are at the top of your game as a modern company with modern solutions, or by showing that you have the best customer support team that wins awards, or by sharing case studies of successful projects you've worked on with positive testimonials and reviews, each of these approaches will build trust and establish credibility in your field. And why would anyone look elsewhere to buy if they've already found someone they trust?

From photos, videos to infographics and e-books, there is a variety of content that can help build a relationship with your prospective buyers. It's important your content satisfies three criteria:

- 1. It is relatable to the reader or viewer?**
- 2. It adds value to their role or experience**
- 3. It is strategic; building awareness, trust and credibility for your business.**

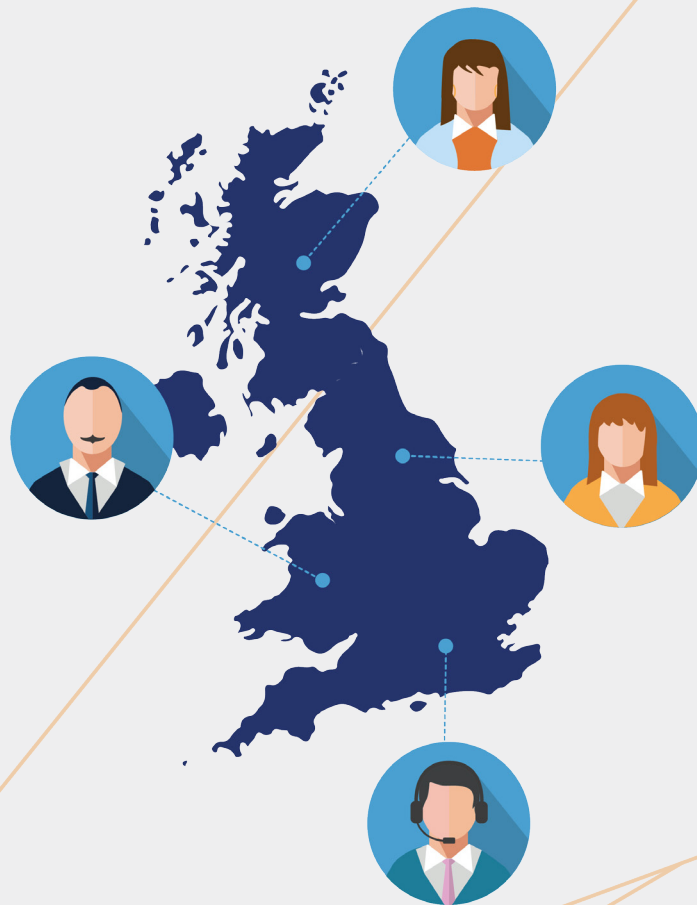
On LinkedIn, the key B2B network, people want content that inspires them and gets to the point and they are most influenced by their peers. Most of the engagement that occurs on LinkedIn is because it is relevant and informative, content which is based on tips, best practice or industry news and trends.



Distribute and optimise content

Remember that people use different networks in different ways so it's important to tailor topics, frequency or publishing and visuals to be optimised.

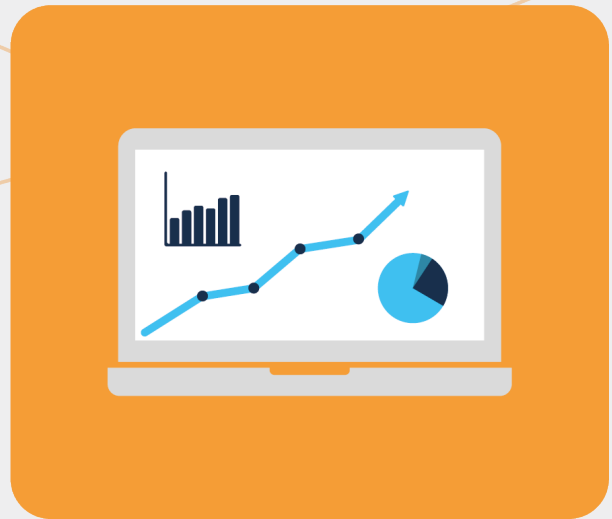
Consider the different behaviours on each social network. People are not just online between 9 and 5 Monday to Friday. In fact LinkedIn engagement has risen at evenings and weekends and there is less content published at these times. Algorithms play a large part in determining which content is seen by your audience but think about publishing when your buyers are likely to be online - perhaps the morning commute, lunchtime or early evening. If you experiment, you'll learn which is the most successful.



It is common practice to publish several times throughout the day on Twitter but this is not ideal for Facebook, once a day at the most tends to be the norm for most brands. Your understanding of your buyers personas is key to optimising content in terms of the messaging you use to share it. A strong visual can catch someone's attention, but a carefully crafted sentence that resonates with your prospect is how you'll engage them.

Finally, using hashtags can help your content to reach more of the right people. Are there event or product specific hashtags within your industry? Researching this will help you to connect with others in your sector.

Monitor and Engage



Social listening is a very underutilised tool in the social selling process. There are a variety of tools to help you 'listen' social, from Tweekdeck which is a free tool for listening on Twitter, to premium platforms such as Falcon, with which you can set up complex social listening projects across social, blogs and forums.

Monitoring keywords and phrases as well as target clients, can give you some valuable information about your target market.

You will engage your target customers by adding value - this gives them a reason to follow you and helps showcase your skill and expertise. Being authentic and using their language will build trust. And most importantly, and perhaps counter-intuitively, focus on producing inbound leads that convert into sales.



Measure and learn

As you implement your social selling strategy, it's important to measure the impact. Inbound leads and conversions are your key metric, but social selling is not an overnight win. This is about playing the long game that consistently adds prospects into the sales funnel and pulls them through.

Measure your personal LinkedIn activity and analyse if your profile views and appearances increase as you grow your network and measure if the people visiting your profile are your target clients - this will help you establish if your strategy is working.

Analysing social content and understanding downloads of digital content from your website will, alongside your personal LinkedIn metrics, help you understand what content is engaging your prospects and providing qualified leads for you to follow up with.



Summary

1. Add value to your target customers online experience by being helpful, build trust and be authentic.
2. Develop a content strategy focused on relevant content that resonates with your target customers mindset to create inbound leads
3. Be social and connect with your audience, being responsive and encouraging reviews
4. Adopt the build, measure and learn model to your social selling strategy - test a variety of content to see what engages your prospects

Useful tools to support your social selling strategy

- Social Brighton's **buyer persona template & guide**
- [Google Analytics](#) is a free analytics tool that allows you to measure and analyse website traffic, acquisition, track results of individual campaigns in real-time and measure online conversions
- [Hubspot](#) Content Calendar is a free calendar to help you plan digital content
- [Tweetdeck](#) is a free scheduling and listening tool for Twitter
- [Falcon](#) is a premium social media management and listening tool so you can get to know your audiences while tracking content performance. You can also merge your social data with your CRM for a unique 360-degree customer view
- [ManageFlitter](#) is a web based app that allows you to effectively curate, prune and grow your Twitter account