How to Use SOCIAL SELLING at Every Stage of the BUYER'S JOURNEY





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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS SOCIAL SELLING?

Social selling is all about leveraging your professional online brand to fill your pipeline with the right prospects, insights and relationships. It offers salespeople the ability to add context to a conversation by tapping into the information that social media encompasses, then use that newfound intelligence to engage with prospects in a way that piques their interest.

THERE ARE FIVE BASIC STEPS TO MASTERING SOCIAL SELLING:



Create a professional brand: Establish a professional presence on LinkedIn with a complete profile that showcases your experience and increases your credibility.



Find the right people: Researching social information to prepare for sales conversations. As Jill Rowley would say, "Content is the currency of the modern sales professional."



Build strong relationships: Making connections and developing relationships with people who can share information and provide referrals.



Engage with insights: Listening to social media conversations, looking for leads, then providing meaningful insights that earn opportunities to engage and influence contacts.



Using social selling tools and measuring what matters: Scaling revenue by taking advantage of innovative selling solutions such as <u>LinkedIn Sales Navigator</u>.

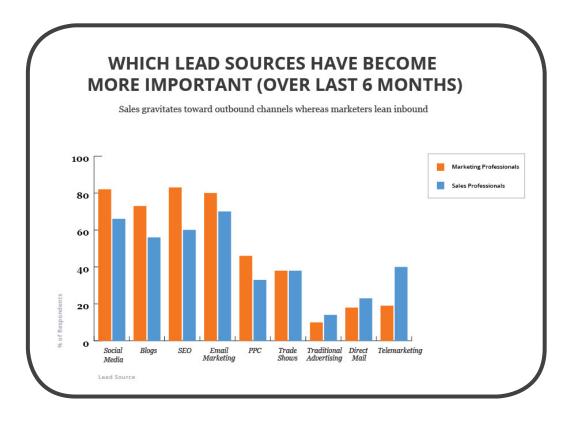
Social selling isn't just for salespeople
-- it has become a crucial way for
marketers to attract and nurture the
right people, and for account managers
to delight their customers to increase
upgrades and reduce churn.

The graph to the right is a snippet from HubSpot's State of Inbound 2014 report, which shows how important social media has become as a lead source for both marketing and sales professionals. Although many sales professionals do still rely on outbound tactics such as telemarketing and direct mail, it's obvious that social selling is one of the more favorable approaches in 2014 for both marketers and salespeople.

In this ebook, we'll go over ways to take advantage of the five steps to

master social selling in different scenarios throughout the entire buyer's journey. For example, if you are a marketer on the lookout for prospects you might need to approach building your reputation differently than if you were a salesperson trying to close a deal.

LinkedIn Sales Navigator is specifically designed and positioned for this type of person-to-person selling. So before you engage with any prospects, you need to make sure your profile puts you in the right light. For instance, you might have previously viewed your LinkedIn profile as just an online resume ... but it's so much more than that! With the right strategy, your profile could actually become a prospect magnet.



SETTING UP YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE STRANGER TO ATTRACT THE RIGHT PEOPLE **LEAD** OPPORTUNITY CUSTOMER

SETTING UP YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE TO ATTRACT THE RIGHT PEOPLE



oday, positive word of mouth on social media is one of the most powerful PR tools available. If you're active on social networks, chances are that your customers and fans are as well. The key to building an army of advocates lies in leveraging your existing network. Start by identifying key prospects in your industry and advocates of your brand that have a robust social media presence. Who is talking about your business? What content are they sharing and how often?

Listen to trending topics. What are people saying about your products and services worldwide? What industry-specific keywords are they using to extend their online conversations? Once you've identified how they refer to given industry topics, gradually weave them into your own communication in order to make a quicker connection.

This section will walk you through how to set up your social media profile so you can identify opportunities and answer these questions about your potential customer base and your industry.



THE STRANGER

74% OF ALL INTERNET USERS ARE ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES, AND **APPROXIMATELY 46% OF ONLINE USERS COUNT ON SOCIAL MEDIA WHEN MAKING A PURCHASE DECISION.**

(Sources: Pew Internet Project & Nielsen)

Social media has become a huge space for doing product research, asking for friends' opinions, and spreading word-of-mouth product suggestions. If you're interested in performing product research, it might be wise to turn to social networking sites such as LinkedIn.

If you'd like to learn more about a particular company or product, start by following their company pages on social media. See what types of deals they offer or what kinds of helpful content they can provide you.



THE BUSINESS

To get started on LinkedIn, follow these steps to setup your profile by going to "Profile" > "Edit Profile" from the main navigation area:

1) Upload a professional photo.

The best photo for your LinkedIn profile is one that looks like a professional headshot; this means no blurry images or other people in the photo. In fact, profiles with photos receive a 40% InMail response rate.

2) Write a descriptive headline.

Our LinkedIn headline is the first description that people will see. Make it count. Good headlines are clear and confident and use terms people search for.

3) Write a short summary to tell your story.

The summary is your introduction to others on LinkedIn. It should sum up, in 200-300 words, what makes you unique as a professional. While this is a section to quickly "sell yourself," it's also a great place to let your personality shine. Include your skills, specialities, and contact information in the summary too.

4) Make your profile public and personalize.

Under your photo, you'll find your url - click on the "edit" button. Choose to make your profile visible to everyone and check off most/all sections. Next, create a url that closely matches your name if it isn't already (e.g. http://linkedin. com/in/kokasexton)



THE STRANGER

Don't stop there! Next, start following employees of the brand on social media and see what those folks have to offer. Finally, if you're interested in seeing what else is out there, check out the social profiles of similar products and start following those.

By initially building your network with people who can help you make a purchase decision, you are setting these companies' marketing and sales teams up for success, assuming they will reach out to you and provide some help.





THE BUSINESS

5) Optimize your keywords.

Add the most important keywords associated with your job to your LinkedIn profile to make it more relevant to potential customers and easier to find in search results. Select a few keywords from your headline and sprinkle them throughout your profile.

6) Get recommendations from colleagues, customers, and other professionals.

Using LinkedIn as a sales tool works best if you have a robust profile with recommendations and endorsements. This is a great way for your prospects to get an understanding of how your past and current customers feel about the work that you do.

7) Connect with LinkedIn Sales Navigator.

LinkedIn Sales Navigator offers the tools you will need to become a social selling pro.

All set with those setup steps? Great! Next, you'll find some sales tips and techniques that are geared towards turning your leads into opportunities.



FROM MARKETING TO SALES: MOVING LEADS DOWN THE FUNNEL WITH CONTENT

ffective content creation and sharing is a critical skill for step 2 of social selling through the buyer's journey. Getting the right content to the right person at the right time with a relevant, personal touch is what separates savvy content creators, curators, and sharers from everyone else. But effective as it is, sharing still comes second to actually creating the content. With this, marketing and sales need to work together to both create and share content to bring in the right prospects. Sales should communicate with marketing about prospects' pain points, and marketing should create the resources sales needs to pull leads through the funnel and close more deals.

When it comes to sharing, there's a huge difference between social sellers who shoot off posts via the "share" button and those who take the time to really craft their messages and share strategically, with highly thoughtful insight. Of course, a sales strategy immersed in sharing can work just fine -- but super savvy social sharers can make themselves glow by creating and publishing their own ideas about a particular topic that matters to their audience. One way you can do this is by using your LinkedIn account as a resource, and not a static resume. We call this 'Resume to Reputation.'

Step 2 is really about the transformation in how you use the online persona that you've just created. This is the time to build your reputation and become that brand that draws people in. Even if your audience doesn't actually read your content, you will become an expert just by putting "wrote a post on X credible publication" on your resume. Not to mention, creating your own content drastically increases your visibility on social media and in search. By consistently creating content, you're allowing for permanent pathways so buyers can come find you directly when they have a specific question or need.





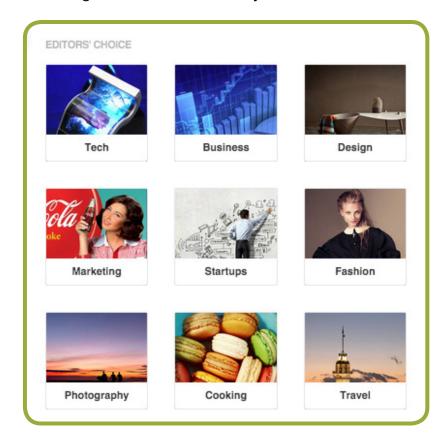
REPUTATION



THE MARKETER

CREATE A PROFESSIONAL BRAND.

Set up a Feedly account. Go to http://feedly.com and click on "login." Choose to sign up with your Twitter account. You will see some recommendations for interesting stories based on who you follow on Twitter.





THE SALESPERSON

CREATE A PROFESSIONAL BRAND.

As Jill Rowley would say, "No one really likes and trusts the quota crusher." That reputation might be a nice one to have internally, but you need to position yourself exactly how you want potential customers to see you. Your LinkedIn profile is a broader view of you as a professional and you can be more personable in the way you tell the story of your career and what your professional goals are.

Here's a sample LinkedIn bio from <u>HubSpot's VP of Sales</u>, Peter Caputa:



I help companies grow by implementing sales and marketing excellence. I've worked with 100s of businesses directly as well as helped 100s of agencies and media companies grow by helping their clients achieve predictable, measurable and improvable ROI from the marketing and advertising services they provide.



This bio really emphasizes how Caputa has helped his prospects' businesses grow. It's clear here that he will put a buyer's needs before his own -- which helps the buyer build trust with the rep.



THE MARKETER

Take 15 minutes twice a week to schedule your social posts. You should have a couple of posts every day, but that doesn't mean you have to take time to do it every day. Try scheduling time on Monday and Thursday to cover you for the week.

Create your own content. Once you feel comfortable sharing other people's content and you feel like you've developed a reputation as a great content provider, start creating your own content. Do you have your own blog? Do you occasionally write for your company's blog? Have you ever created a helpful PowerPoint presentation that could be turned into a SlideShare? These are all forms of content you should be leveraging.

FIND THE RIGHT PEOPLE.

Join a few LinkedIn groups. Check out what groups your leads are in and join those. Listen to the conversations to discover which topics your audience likes to hear about most. Get the daily or weekly group digests sent to your inbox for a snapshot of the group's hot topics and conversations.



THE SALESPERSON

FIND THE RIGHT PEOPLE.

Use Search Filters on LinkedIn to find the most qualified people and companies. Save people who are important to you so you can see their updates on your homepage, account pages, or on their profiles -- that way you'll always know what's going on. Make sure you're continuously monitoring the actions of your prospects. You never know when an opportunity will arise!

BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS.

Is your network currently comprised of other sales reps, or are you connecting with prospects and customers on there as well? By growing your network and connecting with every person you help, you'll be able to make more natural connections and rake in more revenue. Make sure you connect with every prospect you talk to, because even if he or she isn't a good fit for your products or services, that person might refer someone who is.

FNGAGE WITH INSIGHTS.

Once you've built up your network and started following prospects on social, make sure you comment on their posts and discussions with valuable, personalized insights.



THE MARKETER

BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS.

Follow good content providers on social media. Head over to LinkedIn Pulse to follow and discover influencers. On Twitter, follow relevant people and create Twitter lists.

ENGAGE WITH INSIGHTS.

When deciding what to post, think about your prospects. What questions do you hear most often? Sharing content that answers these questions will help to squash objections up front and give you more credibility. Additionally, think about the tips and tricks you share early on in the sales process. Share these on social to get the sales process started even earlier.



Subscribe to the LINKEDIN SALES SOLUTIONS BLOG!

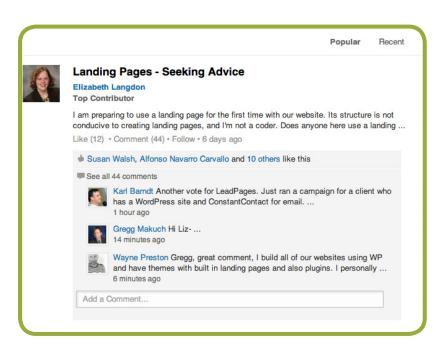
Your go-to source for social selling strategy and tips.

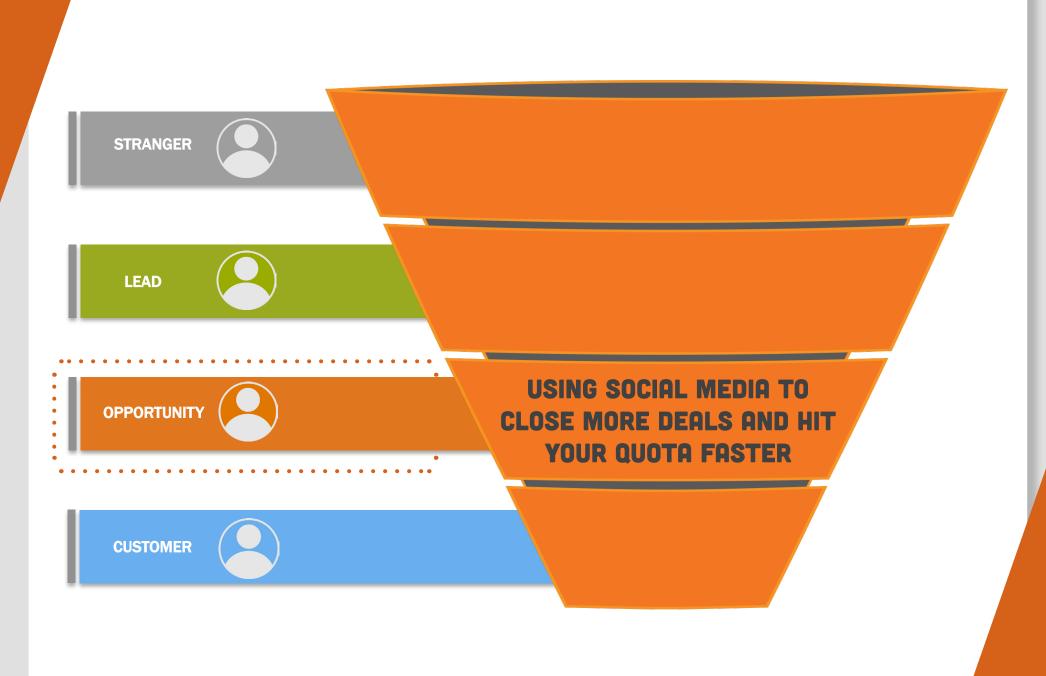


THE SALESPERSON

Sharing valuable content through your social channels is the easiest way to cast a wide net and offer insights. Even if you're not a blogger yourself, just sharing helpful articles from others that show you understand the industry and your prospects' pain points will help a buyer build trust with you.

When you've found an article that would really strike a cord with one particular prospect, send him or her an InMail message to show you were really thinking of ways you could help.





USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO CLOSE MORE DEALS AND HIT YOUR QUOTA FASTER

n a traditional selling scenario, there is a person selling something (the salesperson) and someone being sold to (the buyer). Here, cold calling has always been the standard sales prospecting strategy to generate more leads and sales. The problem is that cold calls only have a 3% success rate due to the lack of understanding sales reps have on their prospects – who they are, what they need and what they care about. Today, in the modern age of social and digital, there are now better and easier prospecting methods to engage with prospects.

This is where social selling comes in ... and its helpfulness goes both ways. Just as the salesperson needs to find and connect with the buyer online, the buyer needs to leverage professional networks for buying support in order to increase their confidence in decision-making.

Social selling helps a salesperson identify a need that requires fulfilling. Perhaps the buyer is experiencing pain points with his or her current product or service and wants to switch. Or maybe the buyer hasn't even identified a need yet, but is open to learning how to make his or her life better, easier, or more enjoyable. Sellers must assert themselves into those channels to gather insights prior to the initial conversation.

Social selling helps a buyer do research to find out if the products or services are worth purchasing. Not only does the buyer need to trust the salesperson, but he or she needs to believe in what the rep is selling. LinkedIn is a great place to build trust with a thoughtful profile that shows prospective customers who you are and how you can help them. You can solidify the relationships you create by connecting with customers and prospects and keeping up with their professional lives. In the side-by-side comparison on the next page, you'll see exactly how you can leverage social selling when you're a salesperson and when you're a buyer.



THE SALESPERSON

MONITOR YOUR PROSPECTS' SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY.

MONITOR AND RESPOND EVERY DAY.

Now that you've gone ahead and created or identified conversation streams, you need to think about how you'll respond to them. Be yourself. Be helpful. Provide value. Be conversational. And always use good judgement.

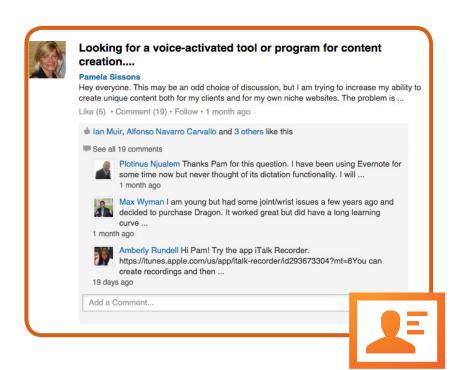
Social media moves fast, so you need to stay on top of this and check at least once a day. It would be a good idea to check a couple of times a day. Prioritize your leads and get notifications of what your prospect is talking about on social media.



THE BUYER

ACTIVELY SEEK HELP ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

According to McKinsey & Company, 42% of business decision makers rely on LinkedIn to help them make purchase decisions. If you're in the market to purchase a new product or service, let a sales rep know! Share your questions, opinions, or frustrations about your current situation on social media to let a rep know you're willing to make the jump.







THE SALESPERSON

MONITOR TO FIND NEW PROSPECTS.

If you're a Business Development Representative, this could be a potential gold mine for you. Play around with creating different streams that you think would capture conversations that potential prospects are having. Here are some things to think about:

- What words or groups might identify "compelling events" that you've seen generate interest in your company in the past?
- Do you have a particular industry or other business profile with which you find the most success?
- What competitive or complementary products have past products been using before your company's products?

The sky's the limit here! Engaging with anyone who has asked a guestion / made a statement related to one of your streams is an opportunity to provide value. So this is a great hunting opportunity to find leads for your segment.



THE BUYER

BUILD YOUR NETWORK.

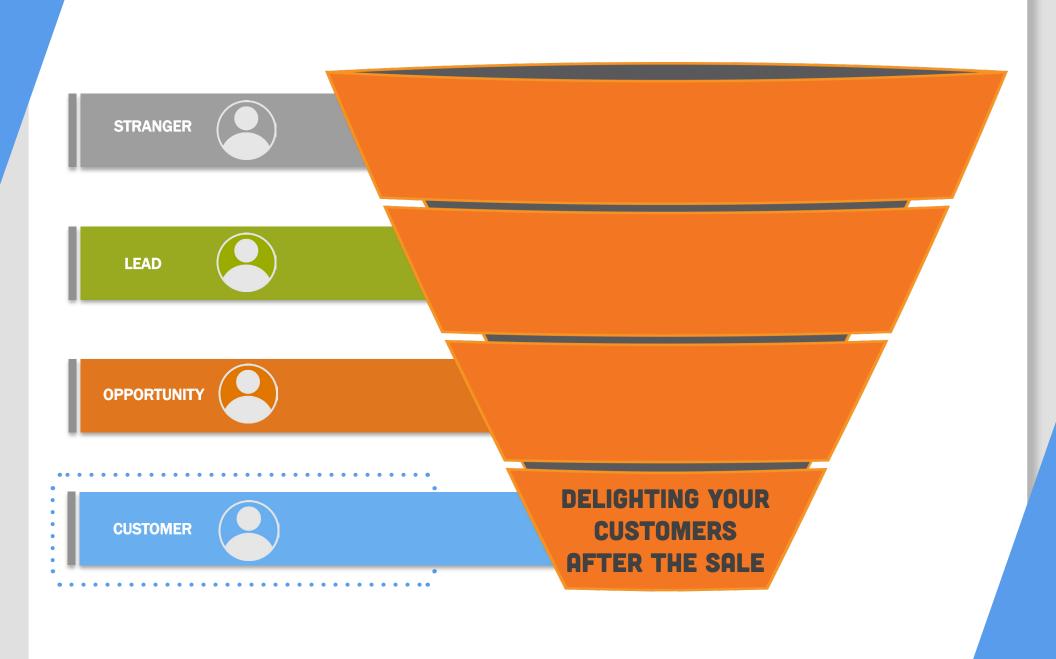
If a sales rep has reached out to you, make sure you do a little research first. Do you have any connections in common? Has this rep been recommended or endorsed? Do you like and trust the rep? Could this product or service solve your problems? These are all questions you should be asking yourself as you're gathering information about the company and the rep.

NURTURE THE RELATIONSHIP.

Another way to gather intelligence is by building your network. Connect with your rep on social and see who's in his or her network. From there, you can connect with current customers who are using the product or service you're interested in and see what they think. Better yet, you can find out how others have solved the problem you are trying to solve.

SPREAD THE WORD.

After you have made a purchase and have had a great experience with a sales rep, why not return the favor? Offer your insights on the sales rep, company, or product in the form of recommendations or endorsements on LinkedIn.



DELIGHTING YOUR CUSTOMERS AFTER THE SALE

Congratulations! At this point, you've learned how to attract and convert leads and close them into customers. Once you've hit quota, it's easy to think that you can throw in the towel and be done.

Remember: attracting new customers will actually cost your company 5 times more than keeping an existing customer (source: Forbes). Social selling doesn't stop after the sale. Once you've gained a happy customer, you need to keep that customer happy. There are unlimited opportunities to sell more to your already happy customers, increase upgrades, or even reduce churn.

The following section will teach you how to retain your happy customers so you can earn that monthly or annual recurring revenue and get your business on a steady growth path. If you're successful, these customers will turn into promoters for your brand and help you generate even more leads and sales just from their referrals.





THE CUSTOMER

If you're a customer who's recently purchased a product or service, make sure you stay connected to your sales rep or account manager on social media. This will help you get exactly what you want out of the relationship with the company.

For example, if you are successful with using the product and you encourage your friends or co-workers to also use the product, the account manager would be inclined to treat you as a special VIP. This could include adding you to beta testing lists for sneak peeks of the upcoming product updates, sending free swag, or lowering your monthly costs.

As Jill Konrath would say, "Ask for what you want, expect people to deliver and fully appreciate it when they do. But if they let you down, be clear on that too." The customer needs to have a solid relationship with his or her account manager and communicate any severely happy or unhappy experiences with the company.



Even after the sale, the account manager should continue to monitor streams with keyword mentions such as "love [your company's product]" or "hate [your company's product]."

If customers are extremely happy with your product, they are most likely talking about it on social media. Make sure you watch these conversations so you can share them on your personal social accounts and spread the word.

On the flip side, if customers are unhappy with your product, chances are good they'll churn and try to convince others to use your competitors' products instead. The way to avoid this is by catching the conversation before it escalates by using the social selling techniques you've learned in this ebook.

Following up is a really important piece of an account manager's job, but email communication is becoming less and less desirable for consumers considering the flood of spam some folks get to their inboxes. In order to still follow up in a personable way, try sending a quick message on LinkedIn and comment on a post they recently shared to keep the connection strong. The easier you are to access, the more likely a customer is to explain when they have a problem, which reduces churn.

CONCLUSION

ow that you've learned how to use social selling through every stage of the buyer's journey, we hope you'll use these techniques to help you find better quality leads, close more deals, and retain more customers. If you'd like to learn more about social selling, take a look at the additional resources listed on the next page.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



HubSpot Inbound Sales Blog HubSpot Inbound Hub Inbound Sales How to Use Location to Build Rapport With

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