



SCALING SOCIAL: GOING BEYOND TECH IN NORTH AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

The buyer's journey has changed, and sales professionals have changed their own approach to include social media tools as an integral part of the sales organization.

Social selling has helped many organizations begin to transform their sales methods in a way that is efficient and impactful, enabling their teams to find and build relationships with their customers in a way that adds value and unveils new opportunities.

LinkedIn sat down with three social selling industry leaders – Jill Billhorn, VP of Sales at CDW; Anthony Robbins, VP-Global Defense, Public Sector Solutions at AT&T; and Bryan Caplin, General Manager and Head of Sales at Axiom Law – to learn more about their own social selling journeys, including what they look for in order to hire top talent, the kinds of tactics that work best, and advice on implementing social selling across the organization.

From left to right:

LinkedIn Moderator

Jill Billhorn
VP, Sales, CDW

Anthony Robbins
VP, Global Defense, Public Sector
Solutions, AT&T

Bryan Caplin
General Manager & Head of Sales,
Axiom Law



LinkedIn: What was the catalyst for you to start your social selling journey?

Jill Billhorn: I've been at CDW for about six years, and one of the things I recognized immediately was that we have a very large "hired-for" sales force. We sell all kinds of IT services and equipment to global companies all over the world, but we make nothing. We manufacture nothing, similar to some companies you know today. Uber doesn't have a car to speak of, but they provide a service around transportation.

We develop relationships across a spectrum of folks, whether they're those that we represent, or customers that we sell to, or our coworkers around the globe. This whole idea of developing and enhancing relationships is really what drove us to a system or an opportunity of how you do that more effectively in a sales organization.

Anthony Robbins: I run the global defense business for AT&T. I joined AT&T 90 days ago, after having spent a career working for Silicon Valley companies where I was always responsible for bringing California Bay Area companies to the federal marketplace. I've been on LinkedIn since May 16, 2006. I have a social selling index score of 95. It relates to my belief system. The profession of selling has profoundly changed. We, as leaders, are leading change and transformation. And for us to do that, we have to know how the tool works, and I've been very focused on that for a decade.

I've led sales organizations that have had responsibility in both U.S. and global environments, so when I ... joined LinkedIn, I did it to keep in touch with the people I'd met over several geographies. It was my online resume and online Rolodex to start, and then I began learning a lot about the fact that our customers' journey has changed. If we don't change to

meet them where they are, then we are missing opportunities and doing a disservice to the sales and marketing profession.

LinkedIn: How do you attract top talent?

Billhorn: I ran our small business market for about five years. It was 600 account managers across the country. I recognized right away one of the benefits of calling on a small business marketplace is that there's always somebody else to talk to. However, the traditional ways to go about finding new clients is often painful or has been something you just have to get through. You have to build a book of business, and it's going to take you a long time, and you may have to just suffer through it and eat ramen noodles. I thought there had to be a better way to attract people to this position without having that be a detractor of new talent.

As part of our recruiting, we use the opportunity to talk about different ways to find new clients through the Navigator tools, so that you never make that truly cold call. There are other ways to find out about an organization, about who to talk to. We obviously have lots of information about customers that we own. It turned into not only a way for us to improve our productivity with our existing account managers, but it really did enable us to attract folks to give this a shot. And, yes: you do build a book of business, but it doesn't have to be in the same way you've always done it.

We do a lot of shadowing when folks come through the doors. I always will sit them with folks who actually use the Navigator tool to just help them understand how creative they can be. Not only has it increased our ability to attract people, it has also decreased our turnover rate, as well.

Bryan Caplin: We're the world's largest alternative provider of legal services. We've transformed the way Fortune 500 companies have consumed legal expertise and become the preeminent marketplace for legal talent for the past 15 years. I oversee sales for the organization.

Social experience is something we look for when we hire. We look at our recruits' LinkedIn profiles. We look to see whom they are connecting with, and if they are sharing insights on LinkedIn. We use LinkedIn to recruit, not just on the talent side,

but we also have our sales team post that we are looking for top talent to join our organization. We talk about it in their interview process as well, understanding how they may have used social in their current roles to grow their book of business. It's become a key part of how we evaluate talent to join the organization.

LinkedIn: What are some social selling tactics that have made you successful?

Robbins: For me, it's about trying to meet the customers where they acquire information. CEB, Forrester, Gartner and the like will suggest that as much as 68% of information that customers get today about products, technologies, companies and services they'll gather on their own, or it will be influenced largely online. Your customers are getting a lot of information. With all due respect to this great profession of selling, when you're shopping for a new car ... the last person you want to talk to on earth is the salesperson. The way our customers are acquiring information has changed, and we need to change how we provide them information ... which includes things like digitally surrounding the customers, social listening, and active engagement where sales reps are providing insights.

I don't believe in the model where marketing provides the insight engine and salespeople push the insights that are provided. Salespeople have



to craft insights based on their own experience. Customers want to do business with sales reps that add value, and they'll actually do business more quickly if they discover you are one that adds value. It's less about social selling and more about the profession of sales.

I really want to add value to the mission of my customers. I'm always seeking out the value I might bring to them as a sales leader. We owe our profession to change at a more rapid rate because I think we'll serve customers much better.

LinkedIn: It's so essential to stay where buyers are in order to intercept them in that process. Once you have social selling established as a need for your organization, you need to make sure it's implemented. Can you share some of your advice on implementation?

Caplin: We've really adopted the Social Selling Index (SSI). It has four components that make up a score. It's based on the number of connections you make – are you leading with insights and updates, and profile completeness? It all comes together in a score out of 100. We believe that the higher that score, the better you will perform as an individual. Wherever possible, we try to draw parallels to that, so we look at our top sellers' SSI. We publish results monthly to share across the organization to show how people

are doing. There's pride in being in the top five. When someone is sharing an update that is really useful, we're encouraging the rest of the sales organization to comment on that post or share it with their network. We've tried to draw positive parallels to performance based on how they're leveraging LinkedIn to drive that performance.

LinkedIn: Jill, what are some additional big wins you've had with Sales Navigator and social selling?

Billhorn: Some of the "a-ha!" moments have been particularly for some of our more tenured sales professionals who've had the same large accounts for a long time, and they're looking for creative ways to move outside their areas. It can be difficult sometimes, especially if you've worked with clients for a long time. You can get out of [the habit of] doing things super-professionally. The same is true for widening yourself. If you've been pigeonholed with a particular customer for a long time, selling the same things, it's hard to figure out how you get around that and widen your stance a little bit. Some of those a-ha moments have become interesting when I see my tenured account managers who are very successful go outside of their boundaries and find Navigator contacts outside of their general area and figure out ways to get around without offending their existing clients and supporters within the organization. That's happened many times.



In the technology business, there's technology being purchased from everywhere in an organization today. Some people call that "Shadow IT."

Marketing areas are purchasing IT businesses, the manufacturing groups and the engineering groups are buying IT. It's no longer just the IT procurement area purchasing the things we sell. You need to figure out where that's coming from. And if they're not purchasing themselves, they have significant influence on what happens. Who is utilizing those services is changing dramatically.

Being creative for me means getting outside those traditional places where you've always sold and understanding that while it may not be the places of large purchasing that it is happening, ... those influencers are significantly different than what we've traditionally seen ... We have to talk to them before those ideas germinate. We can't get to those ideas at the last minute when it is already baked, because then our solutions just become very traditional and you have a much lower chance of winning that business or growing that business with the customer.

I always liken it back to myself. If I think about how I like to be called on for new business, if somebody knows me, and I am connected to someone and they say, "Hey, you should really

talk to this person," or, "This person has great insights," 99% of the time I'm going to do that. Conversely, if I get something in an email that may or may not apply to something that is interesting to me, I probably won't follow up 99% of the time. It is that impactful, particularly when it comes through another vehicle, like an InMail, where it's not the traditional email that I would normally just discard if it comes in with a marketing header on it. I always think how would I like to be approached, how would I respond, and communicate that to my talented account managers, who may be doing lots of things right, but really could enhance the growth of their business by doing something different.

LinkedIn: How have you been able to get social selling adopted across your organization?

Robbins: I don't think it's as important to train to the tool, as it is important to train to the change that is occurring in the marketplace. If you train to that, the tools are easy to use. When we rolled out LinkedIn Sales Navigator to 200 people, we spent 60 minutes preparing and 60 minutes on a webinar, and they were off and running on a Monday. It's not hard. Getting at the organizational dynamics where you can get the change and the transformation is where the big win is. That's where the big change and big opportunities come.



LinkedIn: Bryan, you've mentioned warm calling. Can you tell me what that means?

Caplin: Before we even pick up the phone to make the call, we've engaged with our target customer via LinkedIn, via other forms of social media, and we've hopefully shared insights and best practices on what's happening in our industry, and we've commented on their posts. There's been a level of engagement there, so that when they do hear from us or we leave that voicemail, they're familiar with us and hopefully more familiar with us as a thought leader and they know we'll bring value to that conversation. We've seen our conversion rates increase pretty phenomenally as a result of that.

LinkedIn: What is your advice for sales leaders beginning to implement social selling and Sales Navigator?

Billhorn: Just think about how you're approaching people. If it were you, how would you go about attracting this person to talk to you? I believe it is through connections. CDW is nothing but great connectors of people who really need help around their IT products and services, and people who provide those services. We're the connection point for those two entities. If that's true, I can't really see a better place to do that.

Robbins: My good friend, Jill Rowley, Board Advisor and Partner at Sales For Life, always says, "Your network is your net worth." It's really important to be networking. I recently had an experience where I introduced a vice chairman of a multibillion-dollar company, who has nothing to do with my world, to a New York Times bestselling author. They began a relationship that may be mutually beneficial. I did it all on LinkedIn. I wasn't trying to sell either one of those people anything. You don't focus on the return on investment. You focus on the profound change that is happening in the profession we are in. If we want to be stewards of this profession, we have to be experts at leading change and transformation. To the extent that we do that, we will serve ourselves as leaders, the companies that we work for, the sales reps for whom we have responsibility for growing, nurturing and mentoring. Ultimately, we'll do a much better job serving the customers we're attempting to serve.

Caplin: It is almost a requirement now to have Sales Navigator for your salespeople. As we are looking to hire, it's one of the first questions they ask when they come on board: "Do I get a Navigator license?" If you don't have it already, I think you're probably behind the eight ball when it comes to hiring great talent. Second, you have to lead by example from the top. If your leaders in the sales organization are not active and are not

communicating the value of this, the adoption of social selling will be so much harder. And if you can integrate it with your CRM, that really just brings this to life and allows it to exist in one place. You can see everything right there. It makes you a much more efficient sales organization when it lives inside the CRM.

LinkedIn: How are you hiring differently and have you tied other parts of the organization into the different profiles of people you're seeking? How does the transformation look cross-functionally?

Caplin: HR is starting the process for us by doing initial candidate screening, so they are very much a part of this transformation. They are critical to this process, and they understand who we're looking for has changed with social being a big part of that. Our digital marketing team will inform on the hiring, and they will be part of the interview process, as well, to give their take, especially as we increasingly connect our digital marketing function with our sales organization. That's evolving as we speak, but it's changing how we're looking at candidates from all corners of the organization, not just from sales leadership.

To learn more about creating new connections in transformational times, download this ebook: [Hanging On By A Thread: How Uncertainty Can Be An Opportunity For Growth.](#)