



ASK THE EXPERT:

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Our social selling journey at Microsoft started two years ago when one of our colleagues launched a social command center. After seeing this, we realized the following about the B2B space:

1. The IT buying journey had dramatically changed
2. Buyers were using social media to learn about their favorite brand's products and services and probably wanted to hear from us on social

We decided to launch our own social selling program, as well as a CRM system to manage all the reps in the program. When a seller joined the program, we created a CRM ticket and entered all the education we delivered to that rep -- for example, if she attended a coaching or onboarding session -- so we could track those key activities. We merged the SSI with our CRM database so we had a comprehensive view of all of our reps, how socially engaged they were, and their correlating SSI.

After we integrated the CRM system with our program, we had an opportunity to share some

of our insights with key executives at Microsoft during our mid-year review. This was crucial for executive alignment. That executive alignment started to cascade down to everyone from sales leaders and directors to their sales teams.

We also use a social selling enablement calendar. On a daily basis, any seller at Microsoft can take advantage of live and recorded webinars, working sessions, and in-person training sessions. This education combined with executive alignment has been crucial to our success.

The other component of this enablement is our coaching. As part of our social selling program, we maintain a bench of LinkedIn certified coaches. These people are experts at social selling, with a solid grasp of how to engage with customers over social. Because everyone sells and uses social differently, our coaches work with our reps to create personalized social selling strategies. With a centralized view within our CRM system, our coaches can hold our

sellers accountable and talk to them about their strengths and areas for improvement.

What we found was that our social sellers on the lower end of engagement were generating 30.3 opportunities and those on the higher end were generating 41.8 opportunities. That's a 38% difference, which means for every 10 points a seller's SSI increases, that seller will generate 4.3 more opportunities.

Today, our reps have increased their SSI from a median of 48 to 56 and we're continuing to grow that number. Our goal is to continue to increase our SSI because a higher one represents behavioral changes that equate to more effective sales. We're evolving from reps who are accustomed to cold emailing to ones who are using insights to socially engage with customers. Those behavioral changes have translated into ROI, more sales, and more opportunities.