

Why has the Sales Profession Changed and How to Take Advantage of it?

The days when a salesperson could rely on their personality and goodwill to succeed are long gone. Clients don't make buying decisions simply because they have a great relationship with the salesperson.

The pace of change is accelerating with the internet and mobile devices being perhaps the two greatest contributors to buyer behaviour change. Social media in the form of online forums, social and business groups, webcasts, and online networking are common place. The internet allows retail customers, industrial and commercial clients to connect with your competitors at any time and or to discuss or write about your company, its products or services without you being aware of it.

How has this impacted on the way you sell?

Research by A DemandGen Report White Paper showed that:

- 60% of peer to peer communication said they shared key aspects of their research and buying process with others via social media
- More than 40% of social users followed discussions and threads to learn more about a topic they were researching
- 37% posted specific questions on social sites looking for feedback on how others solved the specific business challenge
- 21% connected directly with potential solution providers via social networking channels.

Add to this information about your company and competitors is increasing annually and is freely available, selling cycles are becoming longer, and salespeople are expected to cope with a greater work load without the additional support.

The customer or client is in control of the buying process and they know it. At the click of their mouse they can buy from your competitor. Their expectations are higher than ever in terms of:

- Transparency
- Quicker response time
- Product or service experience before paying
- Higher levels of service
- Intimate knowledge of the client's business
- A customised approach to their needs

It's becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate between two or more competitors from the customer or client's perspective – at the end of the day this is what really counts. In fact differentiation is decreasing because products and services can be quickly duplicated.

What we need to do is to take a genuine interest in the client's business, show that we care about them and their business. In time this will create a client experience that will pay off financially and emotionally with every interaction whether it's face to face, phone or any

electronic form such as email. This can have a cumulative effect and when a buying decision needs to be made you will be in a prime position to take advantage of it. In fact you could be seen as the point of difference if competitor comparisons are made by the client.

What do you need to do to succeed in this selling environment?

- Have the desire and commitment to succeed
- Be genuine and show that you care
- Develop sales intelligence to gain a deep insight into your targeted client organisation and key people
- Adapt to changing buyer behaviour
- Sell value and not price by communicating key client quantifiable metrics
- Learn all about social media and become actively involved in what will work best for you. Join LinkedIn would be a great start
- Become more competent in selling. Improve your knowledge, skills and attributes. The mean average sales competency level is 3 but the bar is set at 6 and this level of competence is what clients expect.

What are the expected outcomes?

- **Increased revenue** – Customers and clients who feel appreciated, are provided with measurable product or service value will spend more and the business will be more profitable
- **Repeat business** – Customers and clients will keep coming back to giving you more business and will on average tell 5 others of their experience. They become advocates and refer you to other like-minded people
- **Enhanced reputation** – You will be seen as the go to salesperson in your field because what you have achieved for your clients and your consistent manner isn't or can't be matched by your competitors.

You have the opportunity to develop one of the very few sustainable differentiators – you. Social media can be an effective and productive vehicle to use to uncover intelligence about clients and connect with people who can directly or indirectly affect a sales opportunity or a sales outcome.

If you would like to discuss this topic or any other relating to sales or sales management then contact Kurt Newman direct on +61 412 252 236 or email on kurt@salesconsultants.com.au.



Kurt's expertise is in sales strategy, sales management development; group structured sales training and infield sales coaching. As a sales person he has successfully sold products and services in 4 major market/product segments: new product sales, consultative sales, relationship sales and retail. During his selling career he created sales records for three companies in two industries and won many other sales awards for outstanding performance.