



WHY SOCIAL SELLING IS VITAL TO B2B SALES STRATEGIES



There's been some **negative press about social selling recently**, a complaint being that abandoning outbound sales in favour of social selling and digital marketing means you miss out on leads to competitors who are actively targeting and pursuing their ideal customer. This view completely misunderstands what it means to use social selling effectively. The truth is that today, outbound sales techniques are inefficient. **It can take 18 calls to connect with a potential buyer and call back rates are less than 1%**. Quite clearly that's a problem. A problem that many reps are counteracting by using social selling techniques to be **50% more likely to reach their quotas**.

But social selling is much more than just sharing great content on social media. This whitepaper will break down exactly what social selling is (or should be), why it's vital to B2B sales and give you some excellent strategies you can put in place to get results.

WHAT IS SOCIAL SELLING?

Let's start with what social selling is not. Social selling is not creating timely, relevant and interesting content to be shared over social media to build brand awareness and promote products or services. That is social media marketing. While an effective social selling strategy should incorporate some elements of social media marketing that's by no means the end of the story.

Social selling is the use of social media platforms to research, prospect, network and build relationships with customers.

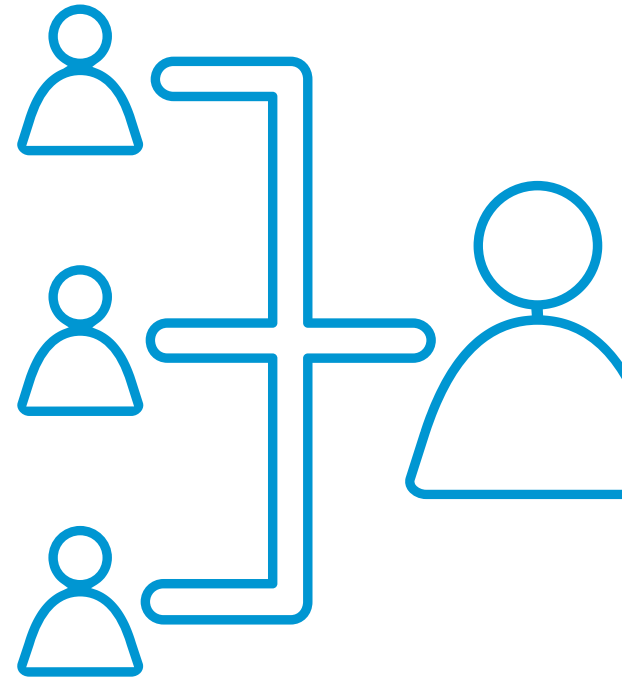
It works by targeting ideal customers and connecting with them by positioning yourself as trusted industry thought leader: sharing appropriate content and being a source of answers and advice. So positioned, the social seller helps the customer make an informed buying decision when they are ready.

WHY DOES SOCIAL SELLING WORK FOR B2B?

We've said that social selling is vital to a B2B sales strategy. Here's why it works so well: *today sales is all about relationships.*

Gone are the days when a brashy scripted pitch would work across the board. The rise of the internet means that customers are more informed than ever before. These savvy prospects don't want to be sold to; they want to have a conversation with someone they trust.

84% of B2B decision makers start the process with a referral and, according to Nielsen, a prospect is **four times more likely to buy** if they have been referred by a friend. This is why social selling is vital to your sales strategy. It allows you to connect with your prospects, gain their trust and become an industry resource. This is reflected in the results of a **LinkedIn survey** that revealed that a B2B buyer is five times more likely to engage with a sales professional who has shared relevant insights about their business.



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SOCIAL SELLING STRATEGIES FOR B2B

As previously alluded to, it's not enough for a sales rep to simply be on social media sharing content. In fact, there are lots of ways you can bring your already existing sales strategies into the social world. Here's how to integrate social selling with your B2B Sales Strategy for success:

Strategy One: Research

Any salesperson worth their salt knows that researching your potential customers makes you far better equipped to sell to them. The most obvious way to make use of social media for research is a manual process of using the different platforms to research pre-identified prospects. By searching their LinkedIn page, twitter handle or facebook profile you can find a wealth of information about their interests, likes, dislikes and their personality style. You can use this information to strike up a personal connection in future conversations. For all platforms, following and liking company pages/accounts is a great way to find out more about what makes them tick and what their company pain points are.

Digging a little deeper, social media sites produce tons of data that you can harness for targeted sales success. Your sales strategy should already involve creating buyer personas to help you better understand your target audiences. You can use social media intelligence tools like **social data intelligence** to check how accurate your buyer personas are. These types of tools will also help you discover what types of content will appeal to this audience and allow you to monitor industry trends and social media to discover competitive insights.

Strategy Two: Prospecting

With your target audience in mind, you can use social media to identify prospects. LinkedIn is a fantastic tool for prospecting. **LinkedIn Search** allows you to find professionals in your target industries and professions. Once you've found potential connections, you can also join groups they are members of to find even more relevant prospects in their industry.

Facebook groups can be used in a similar way. Join groups that your research has shown will be of interest to your target demographic. Here you will find a plethora of prospects who you can talk indirectly to through relevant group postings. But remember, for both Facebook and LinkedIn, NEVER make a sales pitch in a group post. This will be seriously frowned upon and seen as spam.

For Twitter, prospecting can be done through hashtag searches - see who is talking about keywords relevant to your industry and then follow those people whose tweets and profile make them stand out as prospects.

Once you've made a relevant connection, don't push too hard. Instead, go for the soft sell to drive more engagement. Make sure you've done some research to identify a potential pain point for their company and mention how your product can help in a short message that asks to schedule a 10-minute call. Then follow up a week later if you haven't had a response.



NETWORKING AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are all social networks created for the very purpose of enabling users to communicate with each other, making them perfect for sales. However, the overt sales pitch has no place on social media; rather the interactions should be subtle.

LinkedIn is probably the most useful social network in terms of B2B social networking and relationship building. As with all the networks, you want to be sharing content that will be of interest to your prospects as well as sharing their content too. This will put you on their radar and give them the confidence and sense of familiarity to connect with you. As mentioned above, being in the same group as a prospect is another great way to grab their attention. A further benefit to groups is that you will be able to send them an InMail even if they are not a 1st degree connection so long as you are members of the same group. Once you are able to send your prospect an InMail (either by being a 1st degree connection or being in the same group), maintain a soft approach. In your prospect research, you should have been able to identify their business pain point. Now, in brief message, mention how your product or service can help with said pain point and ask for a ten minute phone call. Follow up a week later if there's been no response.

On Twitter, start by retweeting relevant content with brief, insightful tweets. Collaborate with your marketing team to ensure you have interesting original content to share. Build relationships by following, liking and retweeting your prospects but be careful to steer clear



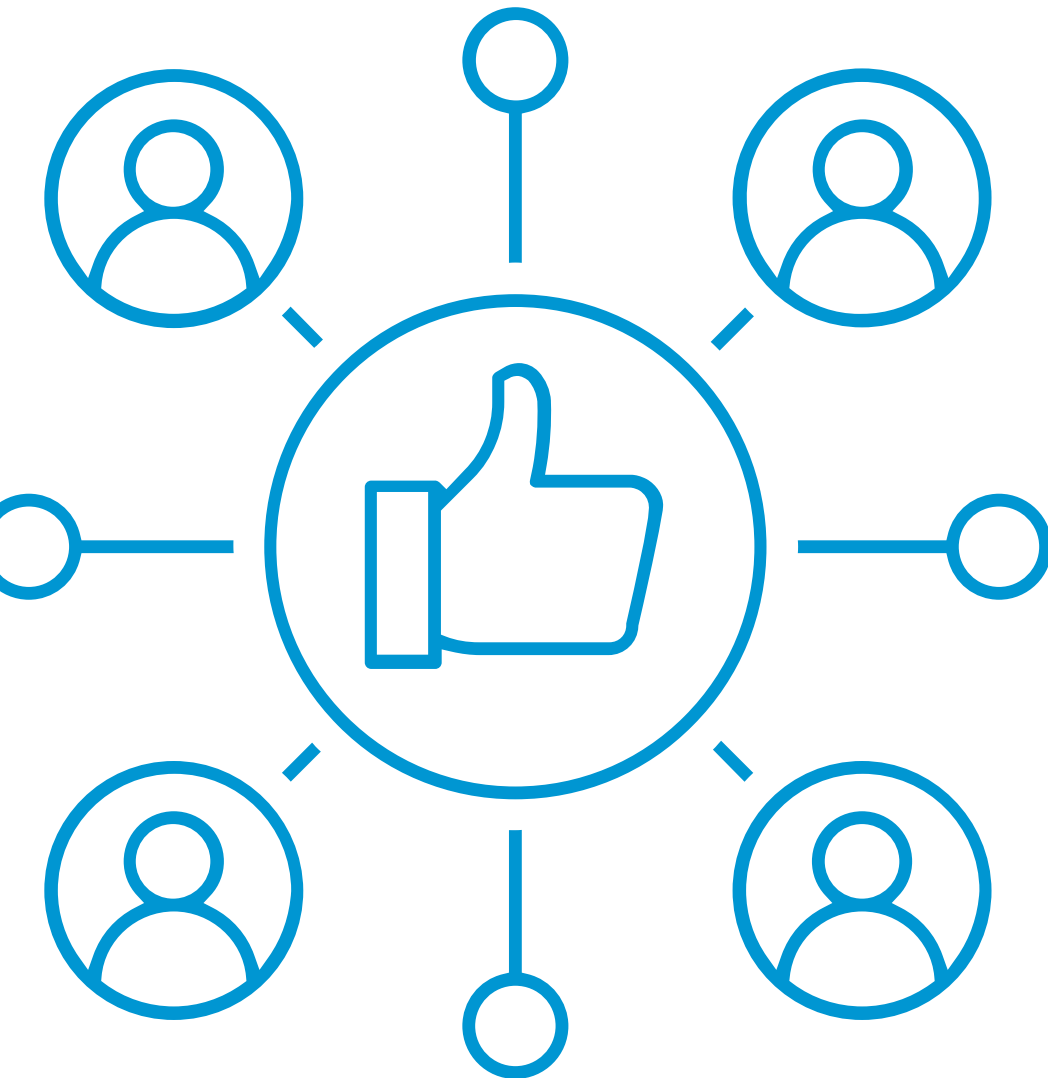
of personal tweets and stick to professional ones. Take part in **Twitter Chats** on relevant topics. Resist sending direct messages (DMs) until you have already successfully engaged with a prospect over a public tweet - for example by retweeting them with a comment to which they reply. If you do message them to set up a meeting, keep it short and original, steer clear of generic messages which are easy to avoid.

With Facebook, share content from your prospect's company page - your prospect's marketing team will see this and may follow you or your company's page back. Be active yet unintrusive in relevant groups. Don't directly talk about your product or service unless specifically asked or as an appropriate response to a question. Be active in providing solutions and answers whether they involve your product directly or not; you want to be seen and reliable and accurate source of information. Avoid using **messenger** to send a prospect a message unsolicited. But if they message you, then that is fair game and ask for a meeting.

IN SUMMARY

“Ultimately, your goal is to build a relationship with a prospect on social media and then move it offline”

Social selling does not mean you should abandon all other strategies. Rather aim to spend a percentage of your time on social selling and integrate it with your other tactics. Ultimately, your goal is to build a relationship with a prospect on social media and then move it offline to a phone call or face to face meeting.



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