



# > THE STATE OF DIGITAL & SOCIAL SALES IN CANADA

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BY THE CPSA & SHANE GIBSON



CANADIAN  
PROFESSIONAL  
SALES  
ASSOCIATION

# INTRODUCTION

Selling through online and social media channels is the new norm. For Canadian salespeople to stay relevant and effective, it's vital that they understand the state of digital and social selling today, and how the ways to reach and engage with target markets and consumers will continue to evolve.

When we talk about digital selling, we are not just referring to the use of social networking tools and platforms. Digital selling is also about using technology to improve or leverage sales efforts and processes; this can include mobile technology, cloud-based and SaaS tools. As you'll read later in this e-book, nearly two thirds, 62.56%, of our survey's respondents

employ online sales tools, apps or SaaS products to help drive sales efforts. In fact, within the SaaS (Software as a Service) space there are over 5000 SaaS companies devoted to enabling all aspects of the sales industry. This includes prospecting, business intelligence, account based marketing, CRM (Customer Relationship Management), social selling tools, presentation software and even AI-driven tools that communicate with prospects and clients for you.

In this e-book, we'll delve into the strategies that will help salespeople understand how to adapt to, and embrace, the changing digital and social selling landscape.

# WHAT IS SOCIAL SELLING?

Let's look at what good selling really is about.

Great social sales professionals learn how to use the web and social networks to be present and relevant in each step of their buyer's journey<sup>1</sup>.

Before we go any further into why you need to make digital and social selling a top priority, let's tackle what "social selling" really is.

Social implies two-way or bidirectional communications. Too many people are busy posting content and their opinions on social networks, but not seeking meaningful conversations. It is through listening and dialogue that salespeople can build rapport. This is the foundation of the trust that gives us the relationship and permission we need to add someone to our sales funnel.

One approach is to look at digital and social selling as layers of technology embedded into every aspect of what you do. When you define "social" it's human, emotionally charged and conversational. Shane Gibson's defines successful social selling as follows:

"Social selling is about using online bidirectional communications and conversations to create an environment where an act of faith can take place."

It doesn't live in one specific stage of your sales funnel; it's connected to everything and everyone and it's about ongoing value-added engagement with our prospects and clients.

<sup>1</sup> Of those salespeople we polled as part of the research into this e-book, 87.5% who rated their social media proficiency as 5/10 or higher also met or exceeded their sales targets!

# WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TODAY'S TOP SOCIAL SELLERS?

Great social salespeople know that the true power of social selling comes from the things that don't entirely scale; those meaningful, customized and personalized one-to-one conversations and interactions<sup>2</sup>. While content plays a vital role, it's function is to eventually drive a prospect toward a value-added and relevant one-to-one experience<sup>3</sup>.

## **Shane Gibson's 9Cs of Social Selling Success:**

One very obvious message we received from those that were using social media and social networks to bust sales quota was that it is a daily habit. Daily consistent use is vital and it needs to be systematic and strategic. To make it a daily habit try some of these:

- Schedule at least three fifteen-minute time blocks per day to execute your social selling activities.
- Set goals on what you will share and how often you will share it. Start with a goal to share at least one value-added piece of content on per social platform per day.
- Have a daily goal to reach out to a certain number of "A" level prospects and clients, it could be a comment on a LinkedIn post they shared, a share of their content or a personal message asking a question, congratulating them etc.
- Ask for at least one introduction per day on LinkedIn or Facebook
- Spend at least 15 minutes per day reading your most active client posts, and checking their profiles. Changes in their job titles or a major newsworthy event can provide natural opportunities for a conversation with your prospect or client.

With around 2 billion people<sup>4</sup> on social media globally – 20 million of whom in Canada<sup>5</sup> - your ability to focus on, and understand the makeup of, your core niche market(s) will be vital to your ongoing online and social selling success<sup>6</sup>. In fact understanding your niche(s), their online behaviors and consumption habits will help you determine what kind of content, interactions and timing is relevant to them. Some questions to ask to help you identify their online consumption habits are:

- What LinkedIn groups are my ideal clients members of?
- What industry leaders, authors and influencers do my ideal clients follow?
- What challenges or major goals do these people have?
- What companies, technologies and products do they follow on Facebook?
- Do they respond to short updates and photos or do they like deep content or videos?
- What major conferences, events or tradeshows do they attend?
- What artists, authors or business celebrities do they follow?
- What geographic regions and time zones are they in?

<sup>2</sup> The Right Brained Sales Revolution: <http://closingbigger.net/2017/08/the-right-brained-sales-revolution-podcast>

<sup>3</sup> This might not always be the case for ecommerce sites but it's true for most salespeople seeking to be seen as thought-leaders because today's top Canadian salespeople understand the power and importance of one-to-one connections and interactions.

<sup>4</sup> According to estimates, the number of worldwide social media users reached 1.96 billion and is expected to grow to 2.5 billion in 2018: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/273476/percentage-of-us-population-with-a-social-network-profile/>

<sup>5</sup> Social networking in Canada - Statistics & Facts: <https://www.statista.com/topics/2729/social-networking-in-canada>

<sup>6</sup> Today's investor is increasingly turning to blogs, online thought leaders, and social networking platforms for investment advice, insights and answers. Adoption rates and success: LinkedIn: 70% used LinkedIn for social selling and 88% gained new business as a result. Facebook: 47% used Facebook for social selling and 68% gained new business as a result. Twitter: 42% used Twitter for social selling and 64% gained new business as a result.

By answering some of these questions you can begin to focus your prospecting by looking for conversations and social forums that your target market is engaged with. you can also customize the type of content you share or create and even the time of day you share it.

There are a number of other key success habits in social selling in addition to making it a daily discipline and understanding your core niche behaviors and preferences.

**We asked top sales influencers and business leaders: “Do you feel that social selling has had a positive impact and what are some of the best practices for implementing social selling in a company?” Here’s what they said:**

**Mark Hunter, The Sales Hunter:** *“Social selling is both a marketing activity and a sales tool. It’s a marketing tool by allowing salespeople to create awareness for themselves and their company. The downfall with social selling is that too many salespeople view it as an excuse to not have to prospect. They believe if all they do is post and share enough content, business will appear ... Social selling can be a selling tool if the focus is on taking on-line connections and turning them into off-line (i.e. telephone) conversations.”*

**Jon Ferrara, Nimble:** *“When you reach out in relevant and authentic ways, people feel like you’re taking the time to learn about them, and when you find ways to add value to their lives, you can start building a genuine relationship... Your brand, your network and the value you add at scale will determine your success. Services is the new sales... It’s the basics that win games and the relationships that matter.”*

**Shane Gibson, The SalesAcademy.ca:** *“Very simply, give more than your competitors think is necessary and connect deeper and more often than your competitors are comfortable with. On giving more: if your competitors share a soundbite daily, then you should share a full blog post or report. If they require an email address, phone number and an opt-in to get business information, then ideally you should make your information or insights available with one click.”*



# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AS A SALES TOOL

While it's important to actively prospect and make new connections online, it's also a good idea to build an online presence that brings the right leads and connections to you. A "Thought Leadership" strategy can make you "discoverable". Today, you need to be your own personal marketing team and position yourself as a Thought Leader within your region, industry or area of discipline. To achieve this, you need to do the following three things well:

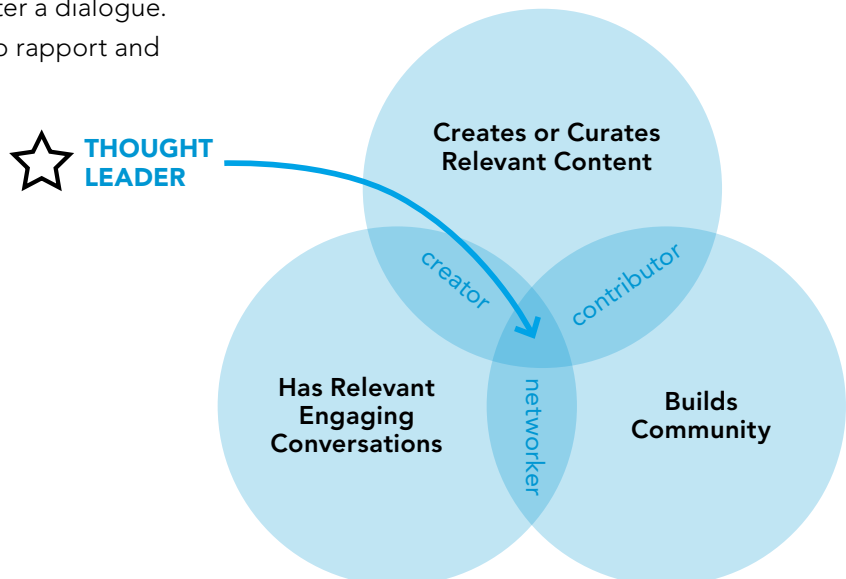
- #1) Create, curate and share content that profiles your expertise and resonates with your target market. Be the source of industry insights and breaking news for your clients.
- #2) Build community. There are two aspects of this. First, make it a daily discipline to expand your network on all relevant social media channels. The second part is to find ways to pull your network or community together in a way that adds value. It's not about pitching.
- #3) Be conversational, talk to people online, ask them questions and do whatever it takes to foster a dialogue. Online conversation is a stepping stone to rapport and trust building.

Most successful salespeople give back to their community. They are also continually expanding their network while deepening relationships with their connections.

When you don't feel like you have enough, you tend to give very little to other people. This attitude feeds a downward spiral in sales and business. In order to get, you must first genuinely give value.

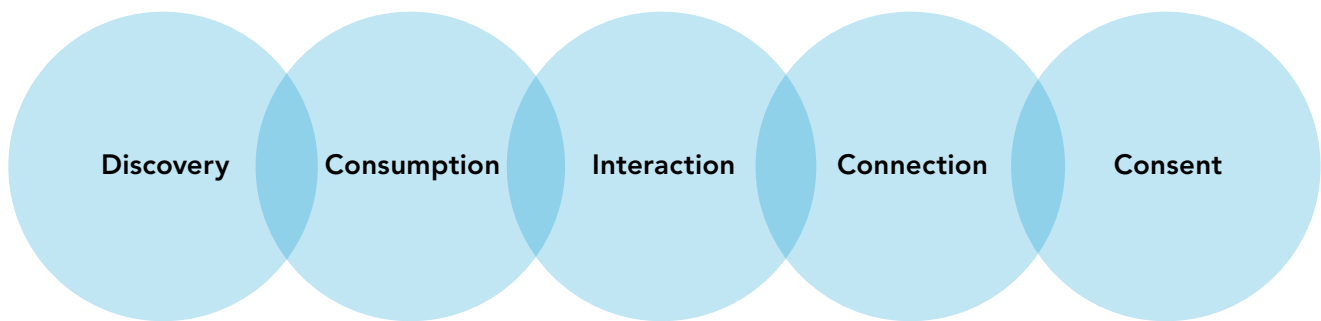
To be great social salespeople, we need to be great personal marketers and storytellers. Social media and social networks allow us to create warm leads in a very leveraged fashion. This leverage, however, requires that you move from pitching and focusing on clicks to creating great content and focusing on building relationships and community online (the click-throughs and selling come later).

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



# THE FIVE STAGES OF CONSENT IN SOCIAL SELLING

## THE 5 STAGES OF CONSENT



Consent to sell (or permission based marketing) is a vital component of successful social selling. This is the natural process more buyers follow online. Too many sales people skip right to the pitch and end up offending or alienating a potentially lucrative prospect. The five Stages of Consent are, in essence, your online social sales funnel. They're all the things that happen to take the prospect from being a stranger to becoming a receptive lead; someone who trusts your opinion and recommendations<sup>7</sup>.

**Step 1 - Discovery:** Discovery is the first thing that needs to happen in your online social sales funnel. This may happen by you pro-actively searching for prospects on LinkedIn or Twitter and engaging them. In many cases, it's the prospect who will discover you through the online content you have shared or created and the conversations you have had or through another online network connection<sup>8</sup>. This is why a proactive thought leadership strategy is vital.

**Step 2 - Consumption:** Now that you have been discovered your prospect will begin to consume the content you create and share. Too many people at this point immediately spring into action, pitching their visitors or new connections with offers, and various other types of Me Marketing. You need to give your content and community time to help build your credibility and warm up the prospect<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Gibson, Shane, and Levinson, Jay Conrad. **Guerrilla Social Media Marketing**. Entrepreneur Press; 1 edition, 2010

<sup>8</sup> Your prospect may hear your name tweeted several times by their community, their friend may email them a link to a LinkedIn Pulse article you've written or through a share on Facebook.

<sup>9</sup> Some of the most effective content today is deep content (Whitepapers and Reports), with that said streaming real-time video using tools like YouTube live as well as archives of past shows are rapidly rising in consumption and engagement.

**Step 3 - Interaction:** Interaction can happen in several ways. Sometimes you can jump right to the interaction stage if the timing is right, other times it can take a while before you are able to engage. Interaction can also occur by you being proactive and visiting the social profiles of your target market and making value-added comments and starting conversations<sup>10</sup>.

**Step 4 - Connection:** When someone connects with us on Facebook or LinkedIn in particular, they are allowing us to see more of their world, their business and their personality. This helps us customize and adjust our sales and communications to match their needs and values<sup>11</sup>.

**Step 5 - Consent:** Many sales professionals spend a lot of time gaining customers, but neglect to truly build relationships, and miss long-term opportunities. On the other hand, there are a lot of social media marketers who have thousands of followers, blog readers and friends, but don't have consent to market or sell to them.

Consent separates good digital and social selling pros - who make things happen - from those who sit back and simply hope things will happen<sup>12</sup>.



Actions and best practices to help you move through the stages:

1. Google yourself and also Google your name + your company and see what comes up. Are there social profiles that need updating? Listings that could be added?
2. Update the networks you are on daily with new curated content
3. Make sure your LinkedIn profile is complete with a profile, rich media, full work history etc. (you will show up more in Google and LinkedIn searches), do the same for Facebook, Twitter etc.
4. Share valuable content daily on multiple networks
5. Converse daily with your ideal target market publicly online
6. Create original content (videos, articles etc.) and share it at least once a week
7. Once you make a connection put them in your CRM and set "next steps" goals. Ideally you will be reaching out proactively with value added content and interactions until you have consent to sell to them.

<sup>10</sup> Another form of Interaction is customer-driven where, after consuming our content, they begin to make comments or even simply "like" the update.

<sup>11</sup> Connection is mistaken by many salespeople as consent to pitch and sell. Connection can be when someone adds you as a friend on Facebook, a connection on LinkedIn, or mutually follows you on Twitter. Connection can also be signing up for your newsletter or blog updates via email.

<sup>12</sup> Consider committing to this daily regime to build major momentum and community: 1) Check for signals (opens, likes, retweets, comments, private messages); 2) Visit "client / prospect" profiles for updates and opportunities to engage; 3) Look for trigger/life events on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter; 4) Thank / follow-back / connect; 5) Add offline connections you meet to LinkedIn, Twitter etc.; 6) Curate or create 1-2 pieces of great content daily; and 7) Ask for introductions on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.



# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND HOW TO STAY RELEVANT

To survive and prosper while artificial intelligence emerges, sales professionals will need to make themselves indispensable with right brain (creative, innovative, non-linear), sales skills, competencies and behaviours. Genuine online authentic relationships and credibility building is one right-brained activity that can't be easily automated.

*Listen to these insights from Shane Gibson on how AI is changing the way we sell:*

- **In a world dominated by selling with AI, who should lead? Marketing or Sales?**
- **Can Machine learning technology help to predict and forecast demand, thereby informing supply decisions to prepare for any given increases and wanes?**
- **How can AI reduce the more mundane sales tasks and free up time for relationship-building?**

**We asked top sales influencers and business leaders: "Do you agree that AI will disrupt the sales arena and replace many salespeople in the next 5 years?"**

**Here's what they said:**

**Andrew Jenkins, Social Selling and Marketing guru, Volterra:**

*"I don't think it's going to replace salespeople. I think it will either enhance their efforts or make them more productive... We're using AI increasingly to book meetings, to surface insights in our social media monitoring, to do a better job of finding sales prospects - finding out what their thoughts are, their feelings are about your product or service ... That is going to help sales and marketing people be more productive, more targeted in their efforts and more efficient."*

**Leanne Hoagland-Smith, ADVANCED Systems:**

*"AI may disrupt some sales processes within the B2B marketplace... To believe AI will replace salespeople is as accurate as those who predicted TV would replace radio."*

**Sarah Zeldman, The E-Marketing Maven:**

*"Consultative salespeople, who are industry experts and focus on helping prospects find the right solution for their unique situation, will never be replaced. Now is the time for salespeople to expand their skill set. They should learn about using a consultative approach to sales, and how to leverage technology to enhance the sales process."*

# SUPPORTING SOCIAL AND DIGITAL SELLING WITH PROVEN TECHNOLOGIES

We've been conscious in this e-book to reference digital AND social sales. That's because it's often all-too-easy to consider the future of sales as being centered around social media and the thought leadership it can help you create. Yet, you need to also harness other technology based, client management and sales process tools. This will ensure you're making the most of the engagement that your social selling activities generate.

To truly get a sense of the current and future direction of sales, however, we need to give some thought to the tools which can support your virtual sales efforts.

For example, the more pervasive social media becomes in your life, and those of your clients, the more you're going to need a Social CRM or social plug-in for your CRM like Nimble. If you're a Salesforce.com user, for example, consider investing in one of the many social selling add-ons available to pull-in social data that your customers and contacts share. Many of these add-ons will automatically associate the data with their contact, allowing you to see their latest Twitter updates and personal contact information from LinkedIn, Facebook and other platforms.

**We asked top sales influencers and business leaders: "What are 2 or 3 of the most effective SaaS sales tools you've seen in the last year? For example, Inbound Sales Products, Lead Gen. Products, and Profile Enrichment Products." Here's what they said:**

**Mat Koenig, Video Sales and Rockstar Auto**

**Conference:** "We have found that the process for marketing and lead generation has been changing dramatically, so we've been using ClickFunnels as a service and it's amazing! We've found that we now have a strategy for marketing so that our ad dollars are turning into us buying the right to market directly to people."

**Tibor Shanto, Renbor Sales Solutions Inc:** "The two that I would point to are Outreach.io, if you are looking to scale productivity and effectiveness, and engage with more prospects. Another would be SalesChoice, an AI/ML SaaS software to guide B2B sales teams with predictive analytics that helps reduce COS by 20-30%, and prescriptive analytics that offers actionable insights to help increase win rates by 15-20%."

**Shane Gibson, The SalesAcademy.ca:** "Nimble CRM is the tool I use to drive my sales process while gathering prospect data from social networks and automatically using their recently updated Nimble Contacts Widget for Chrome. It allows me to look at a prospect, pull more data on them from dozens of data points on the web and track every email I have ever sent them in real-time. Nimble also integrates well with Hootsuite which is the tool I use for publishing social media content and tracking key prospect and client updates and interactions."

# THE STATE OF DIGITAL AND SOCIAL SELLING IN CANADA

As part of our research into creating this e-book, we surveyed 100s of salespeople across Canada. The survey posed such questions as “What CRM do you use?”, “Would you consider your proficiency and use of social media?”, “What platforms are you using?”, and “Did you meet, exceed, or miss your quota last year?”.

## Key findings included:

Most respondents sold into B2B (76.32%). 16.98% in B2C missed quota compared to 13.45% who fell short in B2B sales. Respondents represented a wide spread of industries. The largest single sectors were Telecommunications, Technology, Internet & Electronics (21.83%), then Advertising & Marketing (10.04%). 81.14% of respondents were between 25 and 54 years old. The majority of respondents (62.88%) were based on Pacific time.

## A CRM is not only the norm, it’s aligned with more sales!

84.28% of respondents had a CRM in place. Of those, 72.76% met or exceeded quota. A mere 12.94% of those without any kind of CRM in place, met or exceeded quota. 85.71% of respondents overall, claimed that they met or exceeded their quota.

## Salesforce owns a big share of the market.

34.93% of respondents use Salesforce. That’s 31% more than the next most used tool (Zoho CRM) on the list. Interestingly, 15.72% stated that they did not use a CRM.

Nearly two thirds, 62.56%, of respondents, employ online sales tools, apps or SaaS products to drive sales efforts. 51.98% of those salespeople met or exceeded quota. It is surprising, perhaps, that the rate of success in hitting targets was not higher for those with sales automation and intelligence tools at their disposal. Does this suggest a disconnect between access and the social selling and training



provided? One thought is that many of these tools over-automate the sales process removing personalization – doing the opposite of building trust and credibility.

Our advice is to use the SaaS based tools to leverage your efforts, help keep you organized and automate mundane repetitive tasks. But resist the temptation to try and totally remove genuine authentic interaction in your sales process – some things aren't meant to be done by a robot (yet).

### **LinkedIn is dominant.**

At 92.89%, use of LinkedIn is staggeringly high. Of those in B2B, 95.40% use LinkedIn. Perhaps not surprisingly, LinkedIn was slightly less prevalent in B2C sales. 77.77% in B2C said they use LinkedIn. Interestingly, one in five (19.56%) also use Snapchat. That's 18.97% in B2B and 20.37% within B2C.

### **Those that use social media, sell more.**

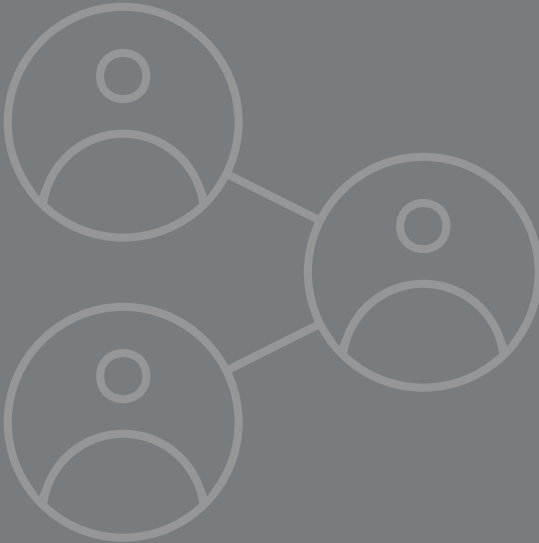
There was also a notable correlation between use of social media and meeting quota. Typically, the more use, the more likely one was to have met or exceeded quota. 86.46% of respondents access social media at least once daily. Of those that use social media daily or more than once a day, 90.05% also met or exceeded quota. Only 2.5% never use social media and half of them missed quota!

### **So, which region did best at hitting or exceeding quota?**

Just 15% of those on Pacific Time (British Columbia and Yukon) missed quota. The number of missed quotas in the Eastern Time Zone (Ontario, Quebec, Nunavut) was up slightly higher at 17.65%. A mere 5.88% in the Mountain Time Zone did not meet or exceed quota. While the sample size from the Atlantic Time Zone was smaller than other regions, hats off to a 100% record of meeting quota!

### **Those who are social-savvy make more sales.**

The mean average respondent rated their social media proficiency at 6.15 out of 10. 87.5% of those who rated their social media proficiency as 5 out of 10 or higher, and answered the question about hitting quota, met or exceeded sales targets. This strong correlation is a major indicator that social selling savvy salespeople in Canada generate more sales.



## CONCLUSION

Social selling is about creating an environment where an act of faith can take place by using social networks and social media, coupled with tools such as CRMs, to foster and maintain two-way dialogue and interactions that build credibility and business value.

Social media also provides you with the opportunity to become a magnetic marketer, drawing people toward you and your brand by applying the three-part Thought Leader formula of Content + Conversation + Community.

The most important factor isn't the number of contacts, likes, shares or traffic you get. What matters, is the number of high-quality prospects with whom you can create a real business and personal relationship.

The onset of machine learning, and ever-more-sophisticated online sales process technologies, means that those salespeople willing to embrace the changed landscape, and become tech-savvy community builders, will reap big rewards.



## This e-book was produced by the CPSA and Shane Gibson

### ABOUT THE CPSA

**The Canadian Professional Sales Association (CPSA)** has been there to support and advance sales professionals with tools, training, and resources that accelerate their success for as long as sales has existed in Canada.

Over the years, the CPSA has helped to transform the sales industry, bringing in rigorous standards, ethical guidelines, and recognition programs that have professionalized sales and set the bar for excellence. Today, the CPSA continues to shape the future of sales with innovative, forward-thinking programs that advance the profession and support sales professionals at every stage in achieving their goals.

The CPSA'S 20,000+ members include senior executives, entrepreneurs, sales managers, sales representatives and sale agents. We support them, and the broader sales community, in many ways, including:

- Competency-based training programs that set the gold standard and take sales professionals to the next level.
- An industry-leading sales designation that recognizes sales professionals with the experience, knowledge, skill, and attitude to get top results.
- Actionable, on-demand resources that help members apply the latest ideas, innovations, and insights to accelerate their performance.
- Educational and networking events that connect our sales community coast-to-coast, live and online.
- Exclusive offers that saves members an average of \$1500 a year.

The CPSA Foundation is a registered charity that raises awareness of sales as a positive career choice for post-secondary students and recognizes and rewards tomorrow's sales leaders. The Foundation's programs, including The Sales Excellence Award for students, are funded through events and generous sponsorships.



Contact us today at [MemberServices@cpsa.com](mailto:MemberServices@cpsa.com) or **1-888-267-2772** to see how we can help you and your team reach new heights in sales success.

### ABOUT SHANE GIBSON

Shane Gibson is an international conference speaker, sales trainer and author on social media marketing, social selling and sales performance who has addressed over 100,000 people on stages in Canada, USA, South Africa, India, Malaysia, Dubai, Colombia, Chile and Brazil. Shane Gibson is #5 on the Forbes.com list of the Top 30 Social Sales People in the World.

Follow Shane on Twitter:

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