

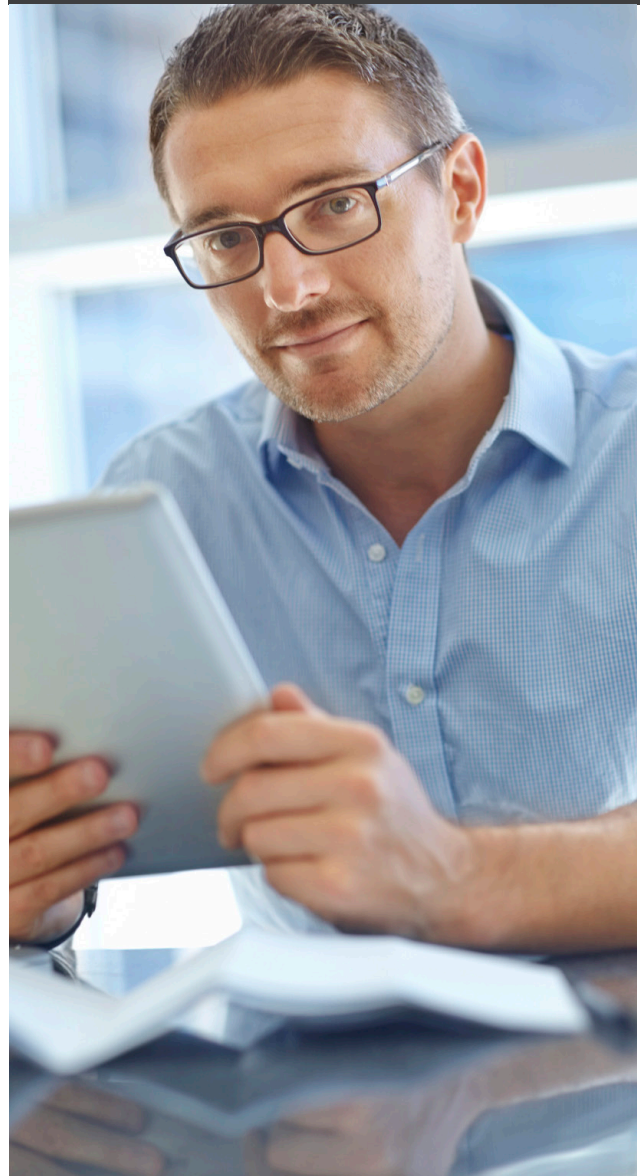
# Sales 2.0

The new  
approach to  
sales is here -  
are you ready  
or not?

# VQ

VISTAGE QUARTERLY

ISSUE 5



# VISTAGE

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## 1

# Executive summary

- The internet has transformed the way people buy – both for businesses and for individual consumers. The Sales 2.0 concept describes how the sales process needs to adapt to sell to the new buyer. It covers how businesses need to gather information to create powerful insights about customers and use them to increase dramatically the effectiveness of the sales process.
- The marketplace, whether local or global, has become transparent for both buyers and sellers. Buyers now have much more information, whereas previously sellers usually had more information than their customers did.
- Trust is more important than ever, as personal recommendations, reviews and opinions are widely available online and are used frequently.
- Salespeople have traditionally been 'hunters', but, in the new environment, the successful ones are farmers – cultivating knowledge and long-term relationships.
- Salespeople now need to assess the stage in the decision-making process that a buyer has reached, identify their needs, and respond with value-added insights that will create a bond of trust.
- The new toolkit of a salesperson includes the adept use of social media as well as a variety of online tools that capture data and bring it straight to their CRM.
- The traditional distinction between sales and marketing will gradually disappear. Both functions will gather rich data about buyers, their preferences and behaviour.
- Every company – whether it is an SME or an international corporation – can master Sales 2.0 and become expert at using efficient online tools to better meet its customers' needs.

*Every company can master Sales 2.0 and become expert at using efficient online tools to better meet its customers' needs.*

# 2

## Introduction

The widespread availability of information, advice and online search tools has driven a dramatic change in the way people buy. Some companies have already changed their marketing to take advantage of this, tapping into the vast number of people searching for products and services online.

**But, by contrast, many businesses have a sales approach that is stuck in the 1990s. They have failed to adapt to the new buyer. They understand neither how a successful sales process needs to work, nor how to use the powerful tools now available.**

Higher-performing sales teams are already exploiting the interactive capabilities of the web to improve their effectiveness at converting leads into sales. The good news for SMEs and medium-sized companies is that the new buyer and the internet do not necessarily favour big firms – creating a much more level playing field.

Whether you are a small restaurant, a chain of boutique hotels or an international engineering business, you need to adjust to the new buyer. The new online tools often favour nimble businesses over slow, rigid competitors. Historically, salespeople needed to be great hunters: finding prospects and converting them to a sale quickly. Information was the weapon of the sales representative – they knew the market, while the buyer typically had little information.

Now markets are transparent and buyers can find many potential suppliers with a quick Google search. This new environment requires farmers who will cultivate and guide prospects as they go through their buying process rather than your selling process.

The change needed is fundamental – it is not simply about having a LinkedIn profile! In fact, social media is only a small part of it.

A familiar example from the consumer market is Amazon. It cross-sells by recording the products customers have looked at, comparing them with other people's purchases, and then using these insights to make tempting offers.

Amazon uses algorithms to cross-sell and up-sell products automatically, but some salespeople also use such insights to sell higher-value items – whether holidays, machinery or business services.

Forbes magazine recently reported that 78% of salespeople using social media outsell their peers<sup>1</sup>. Other research by Aberdeen Group suggests that not only do 70% of best-in-class sales teams use social media but those using what they termed “social selling” outperform across a range of measures<sup>2</sup>.

While old-style salespeople rely on the phone and email (also called “interruption marketing”), leading sales teams have supplemented these with social media and other sources to gain insights into what the buyer is doing.

They will know, for instance, which pages on their company's website specific prospects have looked at; the whitepapers and other content that were accessed and downloaded; the search terms used and where visitors to the website lingered. They will even get alerts the moment prospects return to the website or open an email from the salesperson.

They will have researched detailed information on social media and will have gained insights on who else in the organisation is involved in the buying decision.

They will know which leads are window-shopping and which are deciding, and will have their prospects ranked accordingly so they can communicate using material relevant to their closeness to making a decision.

It ranges from restaurants knowing their customers well enough to send invitations for their birthday or when their favourite wine is on the menu, to high-end B2B salespeople being alerted by their website when a dormant customer shows signs of life.

It is the welcome return of personalised service.

To be successful with the new buyer, out must go sales being treated as a numbers game – it is about identifying a smaller number of likely buyers and focusing on them. Generally, the new buyer will have found you – so having your marketing team making your business visible to prospects is key.

Selling now involves getting the information to build valuable relationships with customers in order to treat them individually. It also requires the provision of relevant information to help customers through their 'journey' –

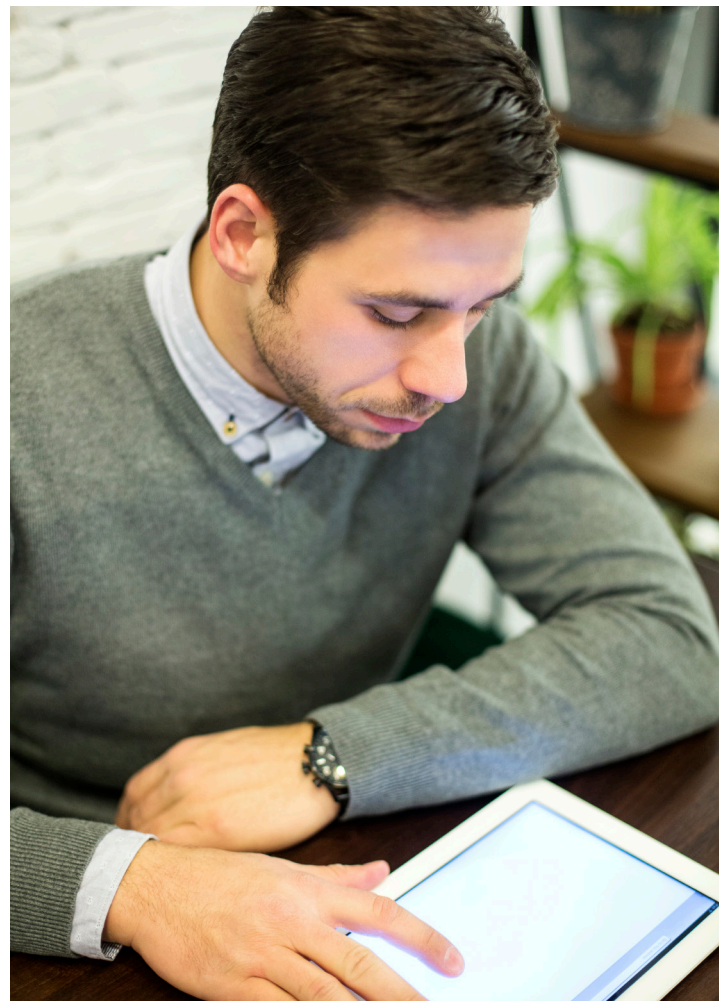
and the gathering of insights about their behaviour so that salespeople can focus on the most likely prospects.

Sales metrics need to become qualitative measures to inform the sales team. Salespeople must master these new tools as well as human interaction.

Although many Vistage members are dipping their toes in the water, there is some reluctance to let go of the old ways that delivered for so long.

Marketing and sales teams may have woken up to the potential of the online world to generate leads, but tentativeness and even technophobia mean that action to improve the sales process is fragmentary at best.

With the economy recovering, now is the time to ensure that your sales team, processes and technologies are fit for purpose in 2014 and beyond.





# 3 The customer is king – and now has a new armoury

The web, now accepted as a boundless source of information, is still growing as a sales channel. The constantly increasing number of buyers who investigate and purchase online – everything from weekly groceries to high-value professional services – testifies to the continuing evolution of buyers' behaviour.

This development starts when a buyer identifies a need and begins searching for solutions to satisfy it. It ends when they receive a satisfactory offer from the best supplier. In the course of this journey the buyer becomes increasingly powerful.

Armed with new and sophisticated tools, buyers can gather vast amounts of information, highly relevant to their needs, before they go for a 'kill' – approaching selected suppliers whose offers match their requirements.

Information engines such as Google, Twitter, TripAdvisor and Yelp have given buyers greater control over the flow of information about your company's products and those of your competitors.

This information is obtained not just from company and consumer websites, but through peer recommendations and referrals, other customers' statements and opinions in social media, news sources, and research papers.

This means that buyers will have analysed a lot of information long before a salesperson comes into the picture. According to research by Forrester, up to 70% of the buying decision is made before a buyer engages with the sales team<sup>3</sup>.

This means that over the last few years, the market has changed fundamentally and sellers no longer control most of the factors that influence their buyers.

“ up to  
**70%**  
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the sales team ”

Forrester Research



# 4 Re-thinking the sales process

True sales professionals are relationship builders; they value their interaction with their customers and consider them key to their success. However, sales teams that continue to pursue traditional sales strategies, ignoring changing buyer behaviour, are likely to meet greater resistance.

Vistage speaker Grant Leboff, CEO of sales and marketing consultancy The Sticky Marketing Club<sup>4</sup>, comments on the changing nature of the sales process and the role of the salesman.

"If you look at the history of selling, people were told to sell the benefits of products and services, but then in the 70s the idea of solution selling emerged: identifying problems and then solving that problem.

"Every management study on sales now says that 60% or 70% of the time the client has already identified both the problem and the solution. So, when you walk in the door, how do you add value? The danger is you will just end up irritating them."

The role of the sales person is to add value and be creative.

"You have to disrupt the sales process," says Leboff. "The customer already has a paradigm and unless you can disrupt that paradigm you won't get the business or your offer will end up as a commodity: you've ticked all the boxes, now what can you do on price?"

The salesperson should start preparing their offer and approach before the formal sales process begins.

They should include things that might once have been seen as marketing collateral, rather than part of the sales process – webinars and white papers, for example.

They have to be able to give buyers a new and compelling insight – the 'Aha!' moment. This will give them credibility and help them win the buyer's trust.

This means that the salesperson needs to be 'quite a different animal'. The new salesperson should be analytical and know their subject perfectly. They should not only understand their industry sector but think like a businessperson: able to go beyond the problem and challenge the client.

The ability to establish and maintain customer trust is even more important than in the past, as the whole arena of social media is based on personal interactions, relationships and recommendations. Social media can create and destroy company and product reputations almost overnight.

## The traditional sales process must change

The traditional sales process relied on the interaction between an informed seller and a less informed buyer but more recently it became a conversation between perceived equals.

Now that buyers are in control of the sales process, the customer's journey will proceed according to their own rules and timing – not the sales force's script and schedule.

This means that sales teams must be re-equipped and also make wholesale changes so they can engage with their buyers in the best way and at the right time.

## 5

# Sales 2.0 – the new sales paradigm

A new concept has developed to reflect how the modern sales force needs to interact with today's buyers. Called Sales 2.0, it is all about equipping the sales team with insights from online technologies so they can engage successfully with the new buyer.

Another term that has emerged is 'social selling'<sup>5</sup>: using social media to create leads and develop them into sales relationships, particularly by using it to access networks, establish rapport and leverage existing relationships. It is one part of the new sales approach.

However, Sales 2.0 is much, much more than having a LinkedIn account and broadcasting your material through social media. In this new and socially connected world, with interactive websites and data being captured constantly, organisations and their activities become more transparent. But it cuts both ways – businesses have much greater insights into buyers' behaviours, tastes, and what they say and do online. Modern salespeople need to learn how to use tools to capture this information and apply it to the sales process. This is where implementing the Sales 2.0 approach makes a dramatic difference.

## Sales 2.0 defined

Nigel Edelshain, head of sales training company sales2.com, coined the term Sales 2.0 in 2006:

***"Sales 2.0 is about sales people using Web 2.0 tools and social media to sell more effectively."***

In Vistage's experience: Sales 2.0 is also about buyers using these new tools to buy more effectively.

{“Web 2.0” refers to interactive and dynamic web-pages that change according to the user and/or allow user-generated content, including the growth of social networking}

Many sales teams report that sales reps currently spend just 37% of their time actually selling. The rest of their day is taken up with administrative tasks and meetings (13.7%), post-sales activity (18.4%)<sup>7</sup>, and researching and finding leads.

The goal of any sales technology is to free sales reps to focus on the leads that offer the best prospects of success. New web technologies have made capturing and analysing data cheaper and easier, as many information searches can now be done in-house.

This means that sales and marketing teams now have access to vast sources of data on companies and individual prospects, as well as new communication channels through which to contact them.





This information is used to take the lead qualification process to a new level, not merely identifying prospects but creating new processes to quantify the best value prospects. In some cases, it can even identify the precise moment at which sales teams should approach customers as they move through the buying cycle.

This emphasis on using real-time metrics to monitor buyer behaviour is at the heart of the Sales 2.0 philosophy.

#### Sales 2.0 helps to:

- Identify potential customers and influencers
- Focus the sales resource where it is likely to generate the best results
- Research targets and markets
- Add value with content and advice
- Communicate and collaborate with customers
- Spot buying signals and anticipate needs
- Score buyers/opportunities and so point to those 'best bets'

The new approach to sales transforms it from a largely interpersonal job to a data-based and technology-driven occupation.

In a nutshell, Sales 2.0 is about taking the insights about customer engagement from the company's websites and social media platforms and creating rich interactions between sales teams and their prospects at the right time and between the right people.

This also enables salespeople to better prioritise their time and serve as experts, not just negotiators, in the product selection process.

While some Vistage members have embraced the new selling process and its tools, others have yet to do so.

#### Sales tools used by Vistage members' sales teams

**Q:** What are the THREE most useful tools for your sales team for nurturing and converting sales prospects?

Meeting	<b>80%</b>
Telephone	<b>49%</b>
Website	<b>45%</b>
Email/direct marketing	<b>32%</b>
Exhibitions/tradeshows	<b>22%</b>
Social media	<b>14%</b>
Shop/showroom	<b>12%</b>

*Source: Confidence Index Survey of 460 Vistage members Q3 2013<sup>8</sup>*

Recent research into Vistage members shows that the use of social media by their sales teams is growing, with 14% of members saying it is one of their three most useful sales tools.

But Sales 2.0 is not about using social media instead of the phone and meetings – it is about using these **even more effectively**, enabling the better identification and cultivation of prospects who are in buying mode.

Research conducted by IBM's Institute of Business Value suggests that 60% of businesses will be using social media and related tools in their sales operations by the end of 2014.<sup>9</sup>

The greatest misconception about Sales 2.0 is that it entails making pitches through social media channels. In fact, a salesperson that embraces Sales 2.0 will use networks like LinkedIn and Twitter to their advantage through all stages of the sales process, moving it forward with email, phone calls and face-to-face meetings, when appropriate – making these traditional methods more effective.

## Foundations of social selling (Sales 2.0)

### Listen

Find potential leads by monitoring social networks for keywords as many buyers express their aspirations and needs through social media.

### Research

Research your prospects and use the information available to your advantage.  
For instance, shared interests or relationships can turn cold calls into warmer introductions.

### Engage and add value

Social media allows a sales person to actively communicate and monitor your relationships with many more prospects at once. For instance, you can use monitoring tools to notify sales teams of trigger events that will minimise follow up calls that add little value to either side.

### Close and add value

When applied with solid business practices, social tools strengthen relationships.  
Effective sales representatives will combine research with building referrals to also discover cross-selling opportunities.

*Source: 'The Definitive Guide to Social Selling', Hootsuite<sup>10</sup>*

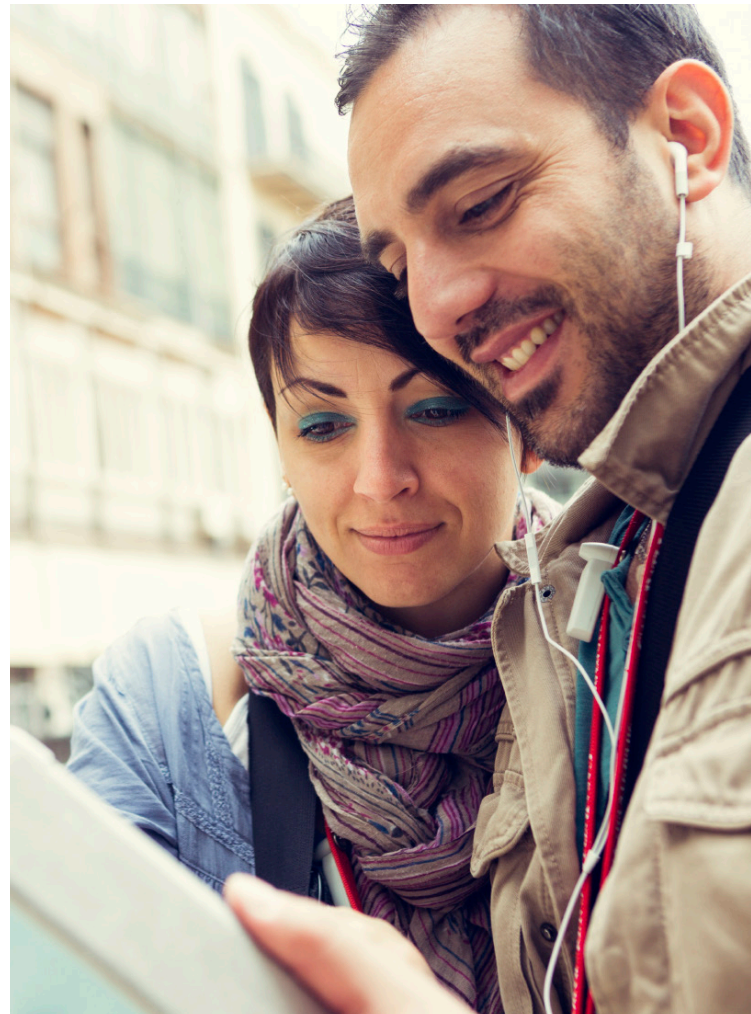
Traditional sales methods are becoming less efficient. Companies that have adopted Sales 2.0 have seen considerably better results. The new challenge for organisations is to identify the appropriate mix of communication channels and methods that their customers are ready to receive and to which they will respond. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn all have their place, but a strategy that works for one company on one platform may not be suitable for another.

To date, most businesses have focused on using social media for promotional activities. Within the next two years, use is expected to shift towards lead and revenue generation, as well as post-sales service.

## Performance benefits of social selling

	<b>Users of social selling</b>	<b>All others</b>
Total team attainment of sales quota	64%	49%
Customer renewal	55%	48%
Sales forecast accuracy	54%	42%
Percentage of sales reps achieving quota	46%	38%

*Source: 'Collaborate, listen, contribute...' Aberdeen Group report<sup>11</sup>*



## 6

# Why sales and marketing must get closer

"The biggest influence on human behaviour has always been social proof, so if I Google you and you come across as a bit of an expert, that's very influential," says Grant Leboff, CEO of The Sticky Marketing Club<sup>12</sup>.

"Buyers put a lot of information about themselves online, whether it's tweeting from a football game or telling the world that they have changed jobs. All of this helps you understand that person and gives you tools to stay in contact with them. However, the skill set to be able to qualify that prospect – the knowledge and understanding of the new consumer and their buying journey – has to come from the salesperson."

Traditional sales techniques versus Sales 2.0  
'Hunters' v 'Farmers'

## Hunters

Cold calling  
Lists and leads  
Lead generation  
Scattergun  
Follows sales script  
Measured by results  
Interruption based  
Understands sales

## Farmers

Two-way dialogue  
Networks and referrals  
Customer nurturing  
Targeted  
Follows buyer's cycle  
Measures a broad range of activity  
Relationship based  
Understands customers

This means that Sales 2.0 also breaks down the distinction between sales and marketing.

"Sales and marketing have got to be properly aligned and together in a much more seamless process," says Leboff. "They can't be siloed. Your existing customers may really enjoy your webinars – so who's responsible for dealing with that? Sales or marketing? The answer is both."

**“ The fundamental understanding that salespeople need to grasp is that Facebook and LinkedIn are not new channels to market but are the building blocks of a completely new approach to selling. ”**

**Steve Gilroy**  
CEO of Vistage

Selling will always be a people business, but it isn't going to be business as usual. The world is in the middle of a communications revolution and, unless businesses grapple with that, they are going to fall behind.

**“ Sales people split into hunters and farmers. I can't see a role for the hunters any more. It's not about bashing doors down or picking up the phone and making thousands of calls. You make things happen in a very sophisticated way; you make interested people come and visit your website. ”**

**Grant Leboff**  
CEO of The Sticky Marketing Club

# How to bring sales and marketing together

Traditionally, the relationship between sales and marketing has been a tenuous one, with marketing taking on the role of lead provider and sales trying to make the best they can with what they have captured. In the new buyer-led world, the marketing process may well generate a very large number of leads. However, most of these top-of-the-funnel buyers aren't yet ready to make a purchasing decision – so how do you focus on the relevant ones?

First, you have to nurture, develop and track your relationship with them, until you notice their buying signals. When this happens, marketing should fast-track these leads to sales for a prompt and tailored response.

Haydn Rowe<sup>13</sup>, MD of The Results Corporation marketing consultancy, says that this early nurturing can range from activities that educate and inspire customers to simply making sure that the company and its products are always front-of-mind.

This nurturing activity incorporates what might have been seen previously as marketing activities embedded in the sales process. Sharing research, offering useful information via whitepapers, and webinars are important tools for sales teams trying to convert leads.

This tailored nurturing approach means that while the number of leads contacted by sales will decrease, the quality of interactions and the response rates will increase. Since nurturing relies on providing relevant content, it is important to ensure that the flow of information from sales should feed back into marketing. In order to create a powerful Sales 2.0 engine, sales teams will need to share their insights about what content adds value to the sales process and report on what is most effective.

Sales 2.0 will depend on strong leadership from the top. Author and marketing expert Frank Belzer<sup>14</sup> says business leaders should not expect the benefits of Sales 2.0 to be instant.

Success involves the business's leader creating a culture of data management throughout their organisation. Every interaction between staff and customers should be monitored and, if considered meaningful, added to the shared pool of company intelligence.

This needs to be seen as important throughout the organisation. A common mistake is allowing Sales 2.0 to be seen as a marketing initiative instead of getting the whole company to embrace it.

## Benefits of combining sales and marketing technologies

- Sales teams can become more efficient by focusing on hot leads. For instance, a sales person will automatically know if a qualified lead does something interesting on your website and contact HQ.
- Sales can engage with leads that require most attention. For instance, sales will have priority leads automatically identified in the CRM.
- Identifying the best opportunities. For instance, sales will know which prospects are frequent visitors to the company's website (and what pages they visited) - accessing their key contacts without leaving the CRM.
- Sales can free up their time and improve their results by focusing on already engaged leads that have reached a certain qualification.

## 8

# Tips for nurturing your customers

## Tips from Haydn Rowe, marketing consultant, The Results Corporation<sup>13</sup>

Haydn Rowe is a Vistage speaker and MD of The Results Corporation, a marketing consultancy.

"One of the key issues in Sales 2.0 is the need to nurture customers during an extended sales cycle. This sort of activity now needs to be seen as supporting a sales process to customers who previously might not have even been considered to be in the sales funnel," explains Rowe.

He explains the difference between the traditional approach and that of Sales 2.0.

"Normally what happens is there's no holding pattern, no place for the customer to go. The sales team have a script and their own timeframe, and that might be six minutes or it might be six months. But the customer has a completely different timescale: you need to stay in touch.

Prospect-nurturing activities might range from email contact to creating white papers and buyer guides, or invitations to webinars. Each customer is different: some might have little or no information about the company, others may have researched the market extensively or even be professional buyers.

You've got to be mindful of the process but also be mindful of the prospect. There used to be a saying that most buyers say 'no' five times before they say 'yes', but it's probably up to eight or 12 times now.

While nurturing ensures that you are in touch with the customer continuously as they move through their own buying cycle, it is important to have

solutions in place as soon as they are ready to move to the next step."

He recommends supplementing regular communications with an occasional temperature check – "possibly a straightforward phone call to ask if now is a good time to talk again."

- The good news is that with email this is very cheap to do.
- The bad news is you need a reasonably good CRM system to support it.

"Whether sales or marketing lead the running is not as important as ensuring that the customer retains that top-of-mind awareness of the company and is seen as a live prospect.

Email is effective and cheaper, and customer tolerance is higher than mail shots. But changing mediums and approach is important – there's no harm in sending a straight-out sales letter once in a while, or crafting a very personalised email from the sales team.

This is not about a bought-in list – these are people who have entered the sales arena. The important thing is to add value at every stage of their buyer journey.

If all your communications are just about you, if it's all 'we' and 'I', then it's boring. But if you give them, say, the opportunity to download a new buyer guide, then you might start to inspire with your knowledge and expertise.



## Commencing the Sales 2.0 journey – Medical Research Network<sup>15</sup>



**Graham Wylie** is a Vistage member and CEO of Medical Research Network, a clinical trials support organisation that aims to enhance the recruitment and retention of patients in clinical trials. He says that his organisation is at the beginning of the Sales 2.0 journey.

Although MRN is one of the most active organisations in its sector on LinkedIn, Wylie believes that he is “only just beginning to understand how these tools might be able to change the way we operate”.

“The degree of change is significant, in some cases monumental,” he says. “Not just in sales but my own area of clinical research.”

MRN is a niche business with a small number of key purchasers, but in order to set up clinical trials successfully the company also needs to ‘sell’ to other stakeholders.

“It’s a whole secondary area of selling,” says Wylie. “We can’t make any money if we can’t get the physicians and the patients interested.”

MRN uses software from PA Consulting called The Social Patient, which has the ability to identify who is connected to whom and to establish who their key influencers are in any subject area.

“We can get to know the digital landscape they inhabit,” says Wylie. “We can see if anyone is mentioning our clinical trial, and with each interaction you can see the ripples getting larger.”

### Key learning points

- Identifying key influencers in your customer market is of key importance
- The companies often need to reach secondary stakeholders to influence the primary stakeholder market
- Regular examination/research of your market is essential to determine the effectiveness of your sales messages



MEDICAL RESEARCH NETWORK

## Vistage Case Study

# From sales to business development – Datatrial<sup>16</sup>

**Emma Banks** is a Vistage member and CEO of Datatrial, a boutique clinical data business that helps design and support clinical data studies for the pharmaceutical industry. The company was established ten years ago and began creating a new sales process two years ago.

Datatrial's Sales 2.0 journey started by moving the focus from sales to marketing – although Banks prefers to call it “communication” rather than “marketing”.

“It’s all about how we get the best customers into the sales funnel and nurture them,” says Banks.

Facebook has been ruled out as inappropriate for a B2B company, but Twitter is used to engage customers and gather both professional and personal data. Sales 2.0 has transformed the sales approach, which is now mostly carried out by a business development team of seven, with largely operational backgrounds, and only one dedicated salesperson. “I know it’s a bit contentious, but one of the things we’ve been discussing recently is if we need external sales support,” says Banks. “Should we rather have good lead generation and skilled operational people who will close the deal?”

The company no longer measures sales performance by repeat business – which a satisfied customer might not be in a position to give – but whether customers are prepared to give references. Rather than expend energy hitting targets for numbers of proposals, the company targets win rates.

“It doesn’t matter if you’ve only got a £3m pipeline if you’re going to get 40% of the work,” says Banks.

Datatrial monitors customer activity for trigger points, such as a study receiving funding. “We send fewer emails than we ever have, but the hit rate is higher,” says Banks.

In just two years, Datatrial has completely revolutionised its sales process using Sales 2.0, which Banks prefers to call “business development”.

“I’m not doing down traditional sales in any way,” she says. “It is essential to everybody, but the way we do it has to be completely different.”

## Key learning points

- Emphasis on getting the good customers and then nurturing them until they are ready
- Customers’ willingness to give references has become a measure of sales success
- Monitoring ‘trigger points’ in customer activity is key to identifying sales leads for active targeting



## Combining marketing and sales: Larkfleet Homes<sup>17</sup>

**Karl Hick** is a Vistage member and CEO of the Larkfleet Group of companies, including Larkfleet Homes, which builds high-quality sustainable developments in the Peterborough area.

The company uses its website and social media to promote the benefits of the local area, rather than individual housing developments, thereby widening its reach. Hick sees the value of using more online tools to nurture customers, but says these will always run alongside more traditional methods, due to the nature of the market.



"We'll use a combination of both, because we know what we're going to get 60-70% of our response from. But we are always looking for ways to increase that success rate. We use Facebook and Twitter – everything really – but some of these things we have debates about, because from a sales viewpoint we're not able to identify direct sales benefits."

Larkfleet Homes' director of marketing, Helen Jones, says that a lot of the marketing activity can be classed as

nurturing customers: "People want to see and feel and gain an understanding of what they are buying."

The company has recently had some very encouraging results with image-sharing website Pinterest, showing the importance of images in this market.

### Key learning points

- Building trust and conviction is key for a high-value market
- Social media promotion is important for 'priming' potential clients as they research the company's products
- Pinterest is worth investigating if you have a product that is best conveyed visually

**LarkfleetGroup**

## 10

## Sales 2.0 tools

In the modern, information-rich marketplace, buyers are much more independent than they used to be. Forrester's research shows that up to 70% of a customer's buying decision is made before they engage with a sales representative. This is indicative of a shift in power – sellers no longer control the factors that influence their buyers.

Easy access to information has empowered customers to progress far along the purchasing journey. However, this also works in favour of sellers, who now have many more opportunities and tools to get to know their customers well – even before they engage with them. This applies equally to businesses of all sizes, whether small restaurants or international engineering concerns.

Many of these tools are the brand-new products of our digital times, while others are trusted and tested methods used for many years by marketing and business development specialists, such as direct marketing, exhibitions and tradeshow.

### 10.1 Social media

Social media is a key tool, which the modern salesperson can use to create and monitor opportunities, and build the company's reputation. By engaging with different audiences and sharing helpful information and advice in the public arena, they instantly extend their reach way beyond their network. This builds authority and trust within specific sectors, as well as creating longer-lasting impressions.

Important social media outlets include:

- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Google+
- YouTube

**LinkedIn** has set itself the goal of connecting all the world's professionals, and it is fair to say that most B2B businesses could find all the customers they need on LinkedIn.



LinkedIn is one of the most powerful tools available to businesses on the web – and it's free. A sales force can use it as one more communication channel with their networks and contacts, either directly or by contributing to special interest groups or news feeds. Powerful search functions are available to identify leads and research prospects.

Salespeople can also use LinkedIn to create a personal brand through their individual profiles. The system automatically updates users when their contacts change their status, and acts as a powerful vehicle for recommendations and referrals.



**Facebook** is the world's largest social network, with over a billion users. While some question the use of Facebook in B2B, it has a wide range of advertising options and many companies have their own Facebook pages for consumers. Salespeople can use Facebook to reach people who are interested in the product or company, and engage them using offers and links to valuable content.



**Twitter** users can rely on it for everything from gossip to weather and traffic reports, and all in 140 characters. Twitter is a great way for a sales team to keep in touch with customers. It has the capacity to engage people by bringing them to websites and blogs and inviting them to start a conversation. Monitoring Twitter can help identify buying signals or even straightforward calls for assistance. Many businesses also monitor it for any negative comments from dissatisfied customers, so these can be tackled quickly.



**Google** is rapidly establishing itself as a social network platform through Google+. In fact, Google+ is already the second-largest social networking site in the world after Facebook, because its profiles are used as the background account for many Google services, including YouTube, Gmail, Google Maps, Android, Google Play, Google Music and Google Wallet.

Google's many search tools offer a cheap and easy way to support Sales 2.0 activities: Google Alerts, for instance, provide a means of keeping tabs on competitors and prospects.

**Circles** is another core Google feature that can be very valuable for a salesperson, enabling users to organise people into groups or lists for sharing across Google products and services.

**Hangouts** (notably used by President Obama) are free video conferencing calls involving up to 10 people, done through the Google+ website or mobile app. Many apps are available for use inside the 'hangout', allowing users to share documents.

**Hangouts On-Air** gives users the ability to create instant webcasts over Google+. A "+1 button" (similar to Facebook's 'Like' button) allows people to recommend sites.

**Google+ Pages** allows businesses to connect with followers by profiles or 'pages'.

**Google+ Communities** allows users to create ongoing conversations about particular topics.

**Google+ Events** allows users to add details of events, invite people, and then share photos and media from them in real-time.

**What's Hot** is a stream showing what Google+ users have commented on, shared and interacted with the most. It is similar to 'Trending Topics' on Twitter.





## 10.2 Social media management tools

These enable a salesperson to save time by focusing their social media efforts – scheduling social media actions ahead of time and monitoring trigger words that will allow early engagement with customers. Such tools include:

- Hootsuite
- TweetDeck
- Rapportive
- Slideshare
- Buffer

**Hootsuite** is a social media dashboard allowing management of multiple social network profiles. It has free entry-level service and many useful resources. (TweetDeck is similar, but limited to Twitter.)

**Rapportive:** this and similar browser plug-ins (like Smartr inbox) automatically load social media profiles alongside emails, offering a richer context for communication.

**Slideshare** links inbound marketing to sales by giving the company valuable insights when visitors download its web content, such as white papers. Slideshare also allows easy sharing of documents and presentations.

**Buffer** automatically schedules sharing from a company's social media accounts at the best possible times throughout the day, so that the company's followers see its updates more often.

## 10.3 Website and Social CRM integration tools

The information available through online tools that monitor the activity of specific prospects visiting your website is becoming increasingly insightful. Examples include:

SMALL/MEDIUM

**Signals**  
**Hubspot**  
**Insight.ly**

LARGE

**Radian 6**  
**Salesforce**

**HubSpot** is an all-in-one inbound marketing suite with powerful email monitoring tools that allow customer interest levels to be monitored.

**Signals** is a free tool (from Hubspot) that allows salespeople to see when potential customers are engaging with their website and emails.

**Insight.ly** is the most popular Google apps CRM and project management package. It tracks leads, proposals, opportunities and projects and manages files.

**Radian6** helps organisations to analyse consumer opinions about them and their products published on the internet.

**Salesforce** is a cloud-based CRM system. It has many features that allow information about leads' online activity to be imported automatically and associated with the contact.

# 11

## Conclusion

The internet has transformed the way people buy everything from low-value household commodities to high-value business services. It is time for businesses to transform their sales processes accordingly.

The local and global marketplaces have become transparent – for both buyers, who search for information and sellers, who wish to communicate with them. This transparency and accessibility of information has changed the ‘rules of engagement’, making the buyer much more powerful. Sellers no longer control the factors that influence buyers, turning the sales process into a true dialogue.

‘Sales 2.0’ describes how the sales process needs to operate to be successful in this new world – and it applies to businesses of all sizes. At its heart is the recognition that businesses need to gather data to create powerful insights that allow relationships to be nurtured as the customer goes through their buying process.

The role of the sales force is now to assess where a buyer is in the decision-making process, identify their needs and requirements and respond with relevant material that will create a bond of trust that will not only bring a purchase but also extend into the future.

Sales 2.0 is not about using Facebook and LinkedIn as sales channels, although it does involve recognising that social media is now an intrinsic part of selling. The new toolkit of a modern salesperson includes a variety of online tools with which they must become proficient in order to gain insights into buyer behaviour from the diverse sources of information that are now available. Analytical skills are also vital if this data is to be used effectively.

Equally important is the provision of value-added information, such as white papers, guides, blogs and videos, to demonstrate to potential buyers the company’s

expertise and credibility. This creates trust in the brand and the company. Trust is more important than in the past, because personal testimonials, reviews and opinions are now so widely available.

In this new information-rich world, the traditional distinction between sales and marketing needs to change. Both functions will be gathering rich data about buyers’ preferences and behaviour, helping nurture the company’s relationship with them. In fact, almost every department will contribute to this process, particularly the customer-facing ones.

This change will require a fundamental restructuring of organisations and re-education of employees – not only the marketing and sales staff – about the vital role they play in gathering insights about buyers and developing a relationship with them.

While this may sound daunting, the internet has, in fact, created a much more level playing field and allows small businesses inexpensive (and often free) access to sophisticated tools.

Every business – whether the self-employed, an SME or an international corporation – can master Sales 2.0 and sell proficiently to the new and better-informed buyers that are making their mark in all markets.

“ ***Business owners should ensure that their sales teams are aware of, and understand, the fundamental changes in the power balance between the buyer and the seller.*** ”

**Steve Gilroy**  
CEO of Vistage

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