

# The Sales Manager's Guide to Social Selling

# About The Brevet Group

The Brevet Group is a sales training and sales enablement firm. We deliver customized sales performance solutions that help our clients sell smarter.

Our approach centers on creating tailored sales performance solutions for clients in a variety of industries who seek a smarter approach to sales. We combine the discipline and insights of management consultants with the practicality of sales training to deliver impactful programs that move the needle quickly for our clients.

- ✓ [Develop smarter sales skills and knowledge](#)
- ✓ [Lead with insight-driven customer conversations](#)
- ✓ [Activate effective front-line sales management](#)
- ✓ [Identify and replicate high-performers](#)
- ✓ [Increase buyer focus and discipline in the sales process](#)

In addition, our online sales training platform, [Brevet Online Academy](#), works as a turnkey sales training solution for companies.

The new reality of sales demands a smarter approach to sales improvement. Let us equip your sales team with the knowledge, skills and tools to succeed in today's changing market. We're passionate about solving problems and we get things done.

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's constantly connected world, you'd think that social selling strategies and tools would be must-haves for every salesperson. Yet, recent research shows that **less than half of frontline salespeople are using social media** for prospecting, monitoring conversations, interacting with customers or gathering intelligence. Meaning, the majority of salespeople are ignoring the power of social to help them relate to and engage intelligently with buyers.

Social media is relatively new and people are naturally resistant to change. Many salespeople, in particular, seem to have a set of rules and habits that they stick to adamantly, even in the face of a shifting selling environment.

Unfortunately, sticking to the "old way" can present some significant challenges in the case of social media. One research study after another points to fundamental changes in the behavior of today's buyers. These trends are impacting B2B buyers in particular. **Today's B2B buyers complete up to 90% of the buying process before they contact a potential supplier.** So, obviously, the selling process needs to change as well. Anyone who is not keeping up and evolving will not be around long.

This eBook is meant to help you, the Sales Manager, activate and motivate your sales team to start leveraging social networks in the overall sales function, from generating leads, to closing deal, to managing accounts. It's time to stop being afraid of the transformative powers of social media and take steps towards becoming more effective, efficient social sales professionals. Your job as coach, mentor and role model in this area is especially critical.

We know you've got a lot of things on your plate. But don't ignore the big opportunity in social media, if done right. Use this eBook as your guide. Get started with this effort right away and see a real impact in your sales team's performance.

*“Sales professionals need to understand that their LinkedIn profile is not their online resume. They simply need to take themselves out of that frame of mind. Your LinkedIn page is really your online brand, your professional profile.*

*Salespeople need to use their LinkedIn accounts as a resource, something internally at LinkedIn we call 'Resume to Reputation.' It's really about a transformation in how you use your online persona, building your reputation and becoming that brand that draws people in.*

*This is where marketing can come in, too. If a salesperson is consistently posting great content about the industry, provided by the marketing team, it will be so much easier for that salesperson to build that personal brand and that social media credibility. That's really what social selling is all about: Giving salespeople the tools they need to have genuine interactions on social media that help them in their sales processes.”*



**Koka Sexton**, LinkedIn

# 5 REASONS WHY YOUR SALES TEAM NEEDS TO START SOCIAL SELLING

Building the case for change is the first step in getting salespeople to adopt new behaviors. Don't assume your team "get's it". Use these five points to ensure the reps are ready to embrace social media strategies.

## 1. Cold calling isn't what it use to be

Cold calling has traditionally been the approach of choice for hungry, driven sales people. However the return on investment from cold calling is drastically decreasing:

- A 2012 [Harvard Business Review](#) article reported that 90% of C-level executives NEVER respond to cold calls or e-mail blasts.
- A recent IBM study found that cold calls are ineffective 97% of the time, and this number has been increasing by 7% every year since 2010.

Replacing the decline in cold calling is the warmth of social engagement. The same HBR article also found that prospects are surprisingly open to short messages sent via social media around relevant topics initiated by the salesperson.

## 2. Social media is here to stay... and that's actually a good thing

The internet changed the way we buy. Researching a purchase used to be remarkably time consuming, especially in the B2B world: multiple meetings with reps, reviewing stacks of product information, scouting out feedback from other customers. Along came the internet and it's transformation of the sales cycle. Potential buyers are now able to do the vast majority of their research online with a simple Google search.

Insight from past buyers plus third-party review and competitive comparisons are immediately available.

According to a 2012 Corporate Executive Board report, 57% of buying decisions are already made before there is any interaction between a buyer and a sales rep. This sounds like bad news. But it's actually not.

Social media fosters an environment where targets, prospects, and customers are publicly providing information about themselves in real time: what content they are consuming, who is influencing their thinking, and what products they are considering.

What does this mean for your sales reps? This is the kind of data that can make or break a sale. This isn't a setback, but an opportunity for salespeople to truly understand buyer needs, deliver relevant and compelling messages, find real opportunities from motivated buyers, and create more meaningful one-to-one relationships with customers.

### **3. Social selling works**

Beyond the hype, it turns out social selling really works. Recent social selling research by the Aberdeen Group found sales professionals who are actively using social media are 79% more likely to attain their quota than those who don't use social selling in their sales process. It's hard to attribute such a large performance gain to too many other things in the world of sales.

The research also found other differences between companies with stronger social selling activities than not, including larger average deal size or contract value, shorter sales cycles, and overall greater company revenue from firms with reps executing social selling strategies.

#### **4. Your sales team has the time for it**

A major concern you'll hear from reps and often your peer managers is that their reps don't have time for anything new. The view is that the average rep is overwhelmed just executing their regular selling activities.

The truth is that your sales reps are likely spending most of their time at in non selling activity. In fact, a recent Brevet survey of sales rep activity across various industries found that 65% of a sales representative's time is spent on activities other than selling. This time included non-productive admin duties and other things that didn't contribute to results. While social selling does add another item to your rep's plate, as the previous statistics suggest, the investment appears well worth the time.

#### **5. It's where your customers are**

The reality is that the people you want to sell to are actively using social media. Consider that just one social media platform, LinkedIn, currently has over 300 million users. These users are business people – your current prospects, customers, your customer's customer.

Using LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook , and other social networks gives your reps valuable insight that is almost impossible to obtain through traditional means. It's like being a fly on the wall in your customer's, prospect's and competitor's world. Social media opens access into this world to find qualified leads and grow sales.

For instance, a lead today might come from seeing someone complaining on Twitter that their current vendor is driving them crazy. It can be an update about a prospect's job change or a question in a LinkedIn group. Even an unassuming comment on a Facebook page can trigger selling opportunities.



*“We are starting to see more aggressive and larger business accounts as we progress and build our tactical campaigns to target specific companies, customers, social groups and other professionals across the US. Your sales force should start to have an online social presence so that the B2B and B2C know you’re engaged, advanced and educated. They may be the only face of your company they see.”*



**Chief Sales Officer, Media Company**

# Q&A WITH A SALES MANAGER

## HOW A SALES MANAGER USES SOCIAL SELLING

Nick Stepanovich, a Chicago-based sales manager with ADP, has been using social media in the sales process for several years. He is now working with ADP to develop a training program for all of its sales people. Crain's Social Media group interviewed Nick back in 2013. Here is a highlight of their conversation.

### **How do you currently use social media in sales? Can you tie it directly revenue? How?**

In short, yes, I can directly tie revenue to social activities.

I have used LinkedIn to do research on individuals and companies, but everyone does that. Through various interest groups I have been able to strike up conversations, make connections and build credibility. These relationships have turned into requests to meet and discuss my services; it has also allowed me to connect with people who can influence others in their decision making.

I have used Twitter to stay abreast of what is going on in the business world, as well as what is going on with my clients. On many occasions I have discovered a compelling white paper, study, or significant event in an organization, which has allowed me to gain access to a company. Moreover, my ability to access useful information in real time has added to my personal brand as someone with their finger on the pulse of business, and more importantly, how that information is impacting my clients.

I measure the connection to revenue by tracking how I use social media to connect or gain access to a company. The resulting revenue is proof enough for me.

### **What is your current social media strategy?**

My current social media strategy is to grow my influence by becoming a resource. I use social media to engage with and grow my professional network beyond the geographic constraints which existed in the past. The more I am viewed as a resource, the more others come to me for information, and the more my comments can influence people. Sometimes I answer questions on social sites, sometimes I help others by making an introduction into my network, and sometimes people need what I sell. And in exchange for being a giving member of my social communities, sometimes I get help in return. People answer my questions, they help me with decisions, and at times they refer me to new clients.

### **How do you manage it all throughout the day and how to do you separate personal from professional?**

I manage my social activities by being well organized with my time. There are times throughout the day where I use social media to do homework on companies or individuals, and as a sales activity, I do that as needed. I also use tools like BufferApp and Hootsuite to help organize my streams of information, they also allow me to segment my social activity so I can quickly find what I need.

[Read the full interview with Nick here.](#)

# COMMON QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIONS YOU'LL GET FROM YOUR SALES TEAM

## What is Social Selling?

Social selling is the practice of leveraging social networks and the associated tools in the overall sales function, from lead generation, to closed deal, to account management.

## What's the difference between social selling and social media marketing?

Social Media Marketing leverages social networks to create general awareness and broadcast the brand's message. Social Selling leverages social networks to build personal relationships with specific individuals that are likely to convert. Depending on the size of the organization, the marketing team normally handles the branded presence on social media sites while sales/business development leverages individual accounts to create personal relationships.

## Social media is useful for B2C... but we are B2B

WRONG! B2B organizations should especially be on social media! You actually know who is making the buying decision. You know who is going to sign your check. And now you have the ability to follow them and get a look into who they are as a human being. This is data that can help you form a stronger relationship with that individual and something that will make it more likely for you to sell to them.

## Does Social Selling really Work?

Of course! Knowing more about your customers helps you build relationships and sell to them. Here are some stats you can share with your team:

- IBM saw an increase of 400% in sales in a social selling pilot program
- 55% of buyers search for information on social media
- 75% of buyers likely to use social media in the purchase process

## I have a LinkedIn profile and have tried this stuff... but never saw any return on it.

Most people treat social media as if you are trying to get married after a first date. That's what most salespeople struggle with: patience. Patience is key for selling with social media. This is not a model for overnight success by any means. But it definitely has its advantages over the old school door knocking.

Beyond patience, what will separate the great from the good in 2014 is EFFORT, quality, and a smart approach. By now, most people (including most of your competitors) are using social media. But just because you are on LinkedIn, doesn't mean that you can call yourself a Social Seller.

These concepts are new, so they're going to take time to understand, practice, adopt and master. However, that doesn't mean we don't push for the change. Going social for the sake of it, doesn't do any good. It's pretty much a worthless activity without any substance to back it up. Do you cold call without being serious about it? Then why try to practice social selling halfheartedly?

## What social network should I focus on?

LinkedIn. One of the key elements defining LinkedIn users is their professional status. LinkedIn is not just a casual network for those who want to procrastinate and share amusing photos during the working day; executives from all 2013 Fortune 500 companies are members of the network, and 40% of those registered on the site earn more than \$100k. 50% of users are also the business decision-makers for their company. LinkedIn is a very specific network, and those who want to market to executive decision-makers from some of the largest and most prestigious companies in the world would be well advised to learn how to use LinkedIn to their advantage.

LinkedIn is also a network where people want to engage on a regular basis. Rather than posting an update on Twitter every week or two, or changing a business' Facebook status once a fortnight, the average LinkedIn user logs on regularly; 35% of respondents to a Lab42 survey said they used LinkedIn every day. 42% update their information regularly, and 61% of those polled said that LinkedIn was their primary form of networking. Those who want to use LinkedIn to improve sales and generate leads for their business should be prepared to put in the effort and make it part of their daily schedule, in order to become part of the professional community.

Buzzwords used to describe the average LinkedIn user sum up their demographic quite neatly: affluent, educated and influential. High-earning, leading industry figures populate LinkedIn densely; penetrating this unique network and using it to its fullest potential can unlock many doors for marketers and businesses.

*“I will connect on LinkedIn, follow on Twitter, RT and/or favorite a tweet. I will figure out whom my buyer trusts and learns from and I’ll #SociallySurround them as well. I leverage the technique of ‘I see you tweeted about Jay Baer’s awesome book Youtility, did you happen to also read Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook by Gary Vaynerchuk?’ I use Google alerts extensively to track mentions of both my potential buyers and customers. I want to stay engaged with my customers because they are my best source of leads, referrals and ADVOCACY!”*



**Jill Rowley**, Social Sales Evangelist

# GETTING STARTED

## 1. Get them to refine their LinkedIn profiles

Start by making sure they have quality LinkedIn profiles. Their profile pages need to attract potential customers. While including the basics on an individual salesperson, the profile should mostly focus on your business and the solutions you offer to prospects. Here is a quick checklist to get you and your team started:

### ❑ **Include a photo**

Remember, LinkedIn is not Facebook. Upload a professional, current headshot. You should be easily recognizable. Do not use a photo that is quirky or has multiple people in it.

### ❑ **Write an informative headline**

Your profile headline gives people a short, memorable way to understand who you are in a professional context. The default headline is your job title but you can edit this to reflect an interesting personal brand statement that will catch attention. Be explicit as to how you can help people – but do it in a professional and well-branded manner. Don't overtly sell in the headline.

### ❑ **Optimize your location and industry**

People search for professionals in specific locations and industries. Be found and help LinkedIn find contacts close to you.



❑ **Create a custom public profile URL**

You can use your public profile URL on business cards and in your e-mail signature.

❑ **Write a professional summary**

Focus on answering three main questions: (1) Who are you professionally? (2) What do you do and how you can help. (3) Why are you unique? What are your skills and specialties?

❑ **Fill in your experience**

Fill out the experience section using targeted keywords and accomplishments.

❑ **Add skills and areas of expertise**

Add skills and areas of expertise to your profile. Now that other LinkedIn connections can endorse these skills, this section is extremely important.

❑ **Make yourself contactable**

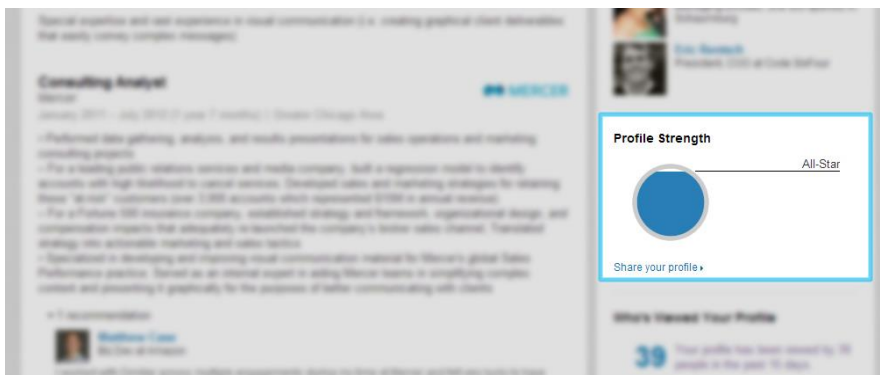
Don't make it hard for those who want to get in touch with you to contact you. Include your email address, phone number, links to three relevant websites and a Twitter handle (yours or your company's).

❑ **Solicit recommendations and endorsements**

Recommendations or endorsements from past supervisors, professors, coworkers, and others who know you well will help you build a credible profile.

One of your social selling objectives with LinkedIn should be to come up high on LinkedIn search results when others (your prospects) are searching for people with expertise your sales team has.

The most important variable in the LinkedIn search algorithm is **profile strength** (i.e. completeness). So, in order to optimize your sales team's LinkedIn presence, you need to make sure that their profiles are 100% complete.



There are 4 levels of profile completeness: Beginner, Intermediate, Expert, and All-Star. The profile sections that must be completed for 'All-Star' status are:

- Photo
- Industry and location
- Current position with description
- 2 past positions
- Education
- A minimum of 3 skills
- At least 50 connections

For more details on what your reps can do to create quality LinkedIn profiles and expand their LinkedIn network, check out our **free video tutorial**.



[www.thebrevetgroup.com/sales-materials/getting-started-with-linked-in](http://www.thebrevetgroup.com/sales-materials/getting-started-with-linked-in)

## 2. Schedule time for focused social media activity

It takes discipline to use social media properly. Work with your sales team to plot out a schedule of focused activity, whether it's a half-hour a day or 2-3 times a week.

## 3. Generate content your sales team can use

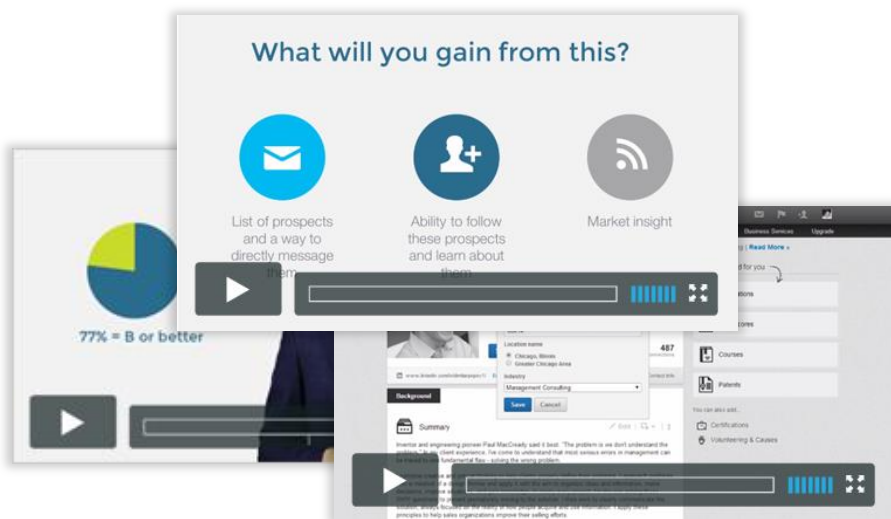
Salespeople use to hand out brochures or fliers to interest prospects. Today, it's all about customized content marketing. Help your salespeople in their effort to position your business as an industry and thought leader by providing them good content that addresses some of the common issues your customers have. Collaborate with your marketing team and the field to best utilize existing content resources and create the right new content.

#### 4. Social selling training

If you are really serious about the opportunity of social selling and want to create social selling rock stars, you should consider formal or online training for your sales reps.

Enroll your sales team in our **FREE Social Selling with LinkedIn** video course which covers the following:

- Keyword optimizing your LinkedIn presence for more and better quality leads
- Building LinkedIn connections
- Refining your LinkedIn profile
- Sales prospecting with LinkedIn Groups
- Using LinkedIn to better understand your target buyers
- Leveraging LinkedIn Company pages
- Utilizing the “Sphere of Influence” strategy for immediate access to hot prospects



[www.thebrevetgroup.com/sales-materials/getting-started-with-linked-in](http://www.thebrevetgroup.com/sales-materials/getting-started-with-linked-in)

*“The holy grail to social sales adoption within an organization is a combination of evangelizing success stories and the ability to track the reach, efficacy and business impacts that social selling delivers.”*



**Sean Burke**, CEO at KiteDesk

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The best thing about social selling is that it helps to create more conversations with people – possibly one of the toughest things for sales professionals. For this reason alone, it's time to add social selling to your sales team's toolkit. Remember, this is a change in mindset, but once you commit and start to see results, you won't be able to live without it.

You've got to make room to adopt social selling – you can't treat it as a nice tag-along item or an accessory you brand, or even something you do for the sake of doing it. Talk about a huge waste of everyone's time and money. If you're serious about social media and how it can transform your sales efforts, then you've got to get behind this 100%.

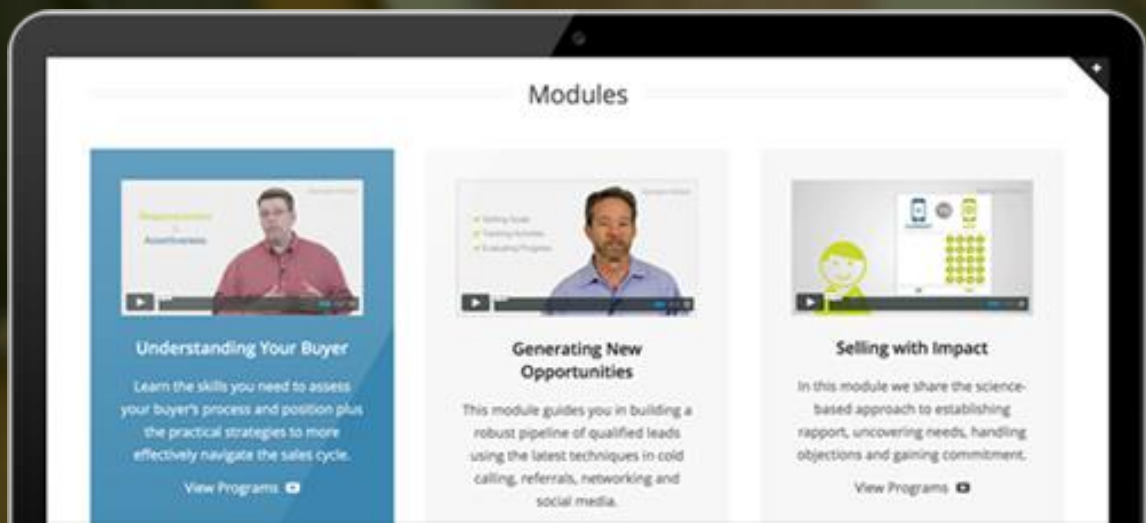
One important thing to keep in mind is that in reality, nothing has changed in the way we sold decades ago. The medium we use today and the expectations of others have evolved, but building trust, creating professional networks, and having conversations are timeless concepts.



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