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Keeping Close to Customers: The New Data-Driven Salesperson

MFB
Manage Future Business



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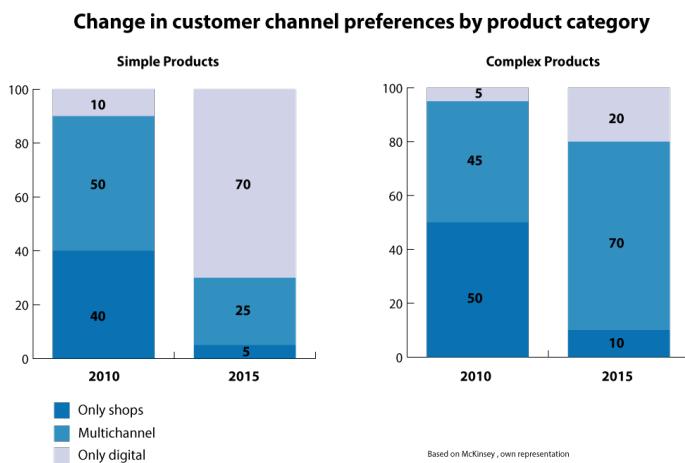
Editorial

Welcome and Guten Tag,

Digital technologies are profoundly changing the way marketers and sales people connect and engage with customers. To stay ahead of the unfolding trends and disruptions, salespeople need a new set of skills. Vendors must differentiate not only through what they sell but also through how they sell. Achieving this goal depends on closing the gap between the traditional and digital service and sales channels and enabling cultural change.

Yours,

In any organization, the sales department plays a pivotal role in the success of the business. Salespeople bridge the gap between customer needs and the product/service that fulfils that need. However, the sales profession is undergoing some pretty radical changes. The buyer is in charge, technology is transforming the profession. Whether it's social platforms, data capabilities, or mobile technology, the way salespeople connect and engage with buyers is fundamentally changing. In this challenging environment, vendors must differentiate not only through what they sell but also through how they sell. Their sales approach must become one of their key competitive strengths.



Sell the solution, not the product: The need for a customer-centric strategy

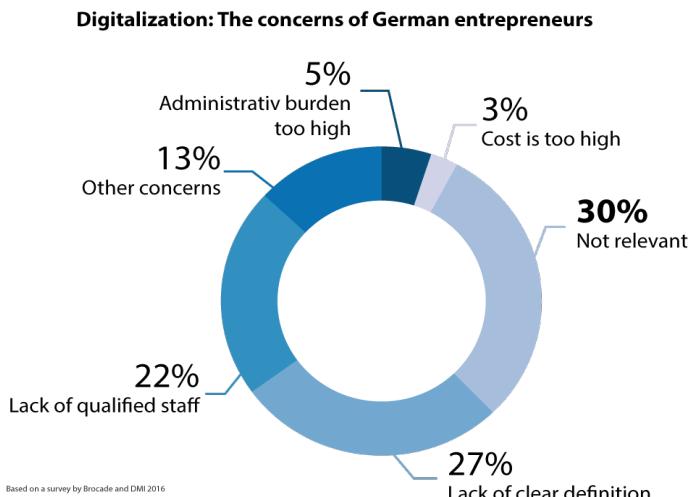
The modern buyer is more informed than ever before and he is no longer interested in hearing sales reps talk about their products. Companies accustomed to selling products and walking away

are being forced to prove how they add real value. Strong sales are driven by emphasizing the benefits that your product or service brings to your customers. If you know the challenges that face them, it's much easier to offer them solutions.

The solution selling methodology requires considerable knowledge and expertise on the part of the sales rep. In order to sell a solution, the sales rep must understand customer pain points and how they can be addressed. By adopting a consultative approach, the sales rep becomes a trusted partner in a collaborative process.

Digitization offers opportunities for dramatically improving the customer experience while reducing costs and decreasing time to market. By making smarter use of customer data, sales reps can predict behavior, drive sales, and deepen relationships. Customer Relationship Management helps your business keep track of customers and come up with more efficient ways to market to them. Both small and large businesses have implemented CRM software solutions in an effort to understand their customers better, serve them better and ultimately increase sales and build loyalty.

To effectively implement the required changes in order to sell under the new conditions imposes a huge challenge to sales organizations. They not only need to understand the proposed selling approach but they also need to change their way of thinking. Changing individual salesperson's habits and mindset is unfortunately easier in theory, than in practice.



The customer decides: Why customer insight is important for your business

Social and mobile have transformed customer expectations. Customers expect quality, personalized service -on their terms- at any time and via any channel. Successful selling means showing your prospective customers how your product meets their needs and why your offering is the right solution.

The adoption of new management tools will allow companies to have access to an unprecedented amount of information on customers and can attribute new revenue to specific channels and selling activities. Sales executives will be able to acquire new insights into the selling behaviors, methods, and approaches that deliver the highest return-on-investment (ROI). Equipping your sales team with these details can help them creatively and strategically pitch new product offers to customers, which can increase sales.

As customers and services become more sophisticated, the sales force has to follow suit. Mobile sales tools can greatly improve how a sales force interacts with customers. The tools should simplify any ordering processes, improving productivity and ensuring consistent information.

Sales reps have to evolve in this digital environment. Companies that do not hire and sell to this tech-savvy generation will not be able to compete successfully. However, technical skills are not all. Skills that govern a salesperson's ability to communicate, solve problems, form relationships, explore new ideas, and prioritize tasks are often overlooked in education and training. These "soft skills" are just as crucial to business success as the more recognized "hard skills."

Increasing the engagement with target groups: How to create a successful digital marketing strategy

Customers expect to be able to access facts about products and services at any time and via all channels. They are demanding intuitive interfaces, around-the-clock availability, real-time fulfillment, and personalized treatment. To stay in the game, B2B vendors need to find ways to communicate their USP by sensibly integrating digital channels in their individual sales systems. An effective communication strategy defines goals for target groups and individual channels and renders them verifiable through the use of indicators.

The internet and social media have changed the

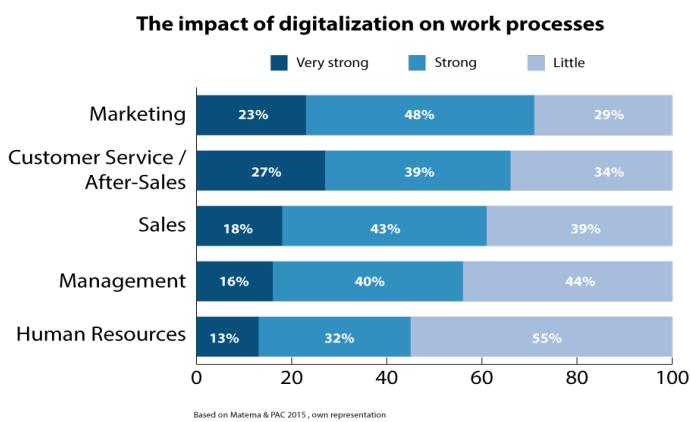
Communication Skills Great Salespeople ...

- effectively engage in senior executive conversations; clearly displaying mastery of the language of senior executives
- can adapt their personal communication style to that of the customer organization
- use effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- develop the ability to work with and establish trust with diverse people
- can develop and deliver compelling presentations

customer decision journey entirely. The modern buyer is better informed than ever before. Today, customers are in control and they engage with companies on their own terms. As a result, understanding and responding to your customer's journey online should be the core of your marketing strategy.

The measures to digitize marketing and sales will help companies large and small. The use of modern forms of communication allows SMEs to increase their visibility in the market and broaden their customer base both nationally and internationally. Digitization will help SMEs be omnipresent and attractive to skilled employees in times of demographic change. When they get it right, SMEs can also offer more competitive prices because of lower costs, better operational controls, and less risk.

Unfortunately, many B2B firms have so far devoted only a fraction of their marketing and sales budgets to digital channels. However, listening and responding to customers can no longer be done in a channel silo. Your buyers are looking for an experience that is integrated across all channels (e.g. social, email, mobile, offline) and relevant based on everything they do. Integrating digital customer care or customer service solutions now becomes as important, if not more important, than the product itself. Empower your agents with everything that they need at their fingertips to deliver amazing customer service. The quality of service, the cleanliness of the operation, and responsiveness to real time events are crucial.



Placing the focus on employees: Organizational culture in the digital age

The digitization of the economy will cause disruptions in every business and every industry, so companies and their employees have to be prepared. Today's customers can afford to be extra picky and discerning in their choices. They ask for transparency, service and quality. To meet these challenges, firms have to become more sophisticated in the best practices for organizational change management. True leaders inspire and connect people to make their digital transformation successful. They understand that employee engagement can be a competitive edge and that building an attractive corporate culture should be a top priority. Building an organizational culture for a successful adoption of digital technologies, requires everyone in the organization, from leaders to front-line employees, to be prepared to work in an open and transparent way. A great corporate culture presents your organization as a good employer and a great place to work and can, as a result, help with recruitment, retention and generally affect market perception of your company.

The knowledge base and soft skills salespeople must have in order to successfully win a deal have increased tremendously. In today's B2B selling marketplace, salespeople need to understand the customer's business and industry better than the customer himself. They also need the soft skills to negotiate and influence a diverse team of stakeholders. With digital talent in high demand and short supply, most sales directors struggle to attract salespeople with the desired competencies. Hence, tapping the full potential of employees will become increasingly critical.

Training and development: The basis for a successful sales force

The changes driven by digitalization are now impacting how organizations need to train their workforce, and this transformation will certainly accelerate. As demands and expectations grow for sales teams, building expertise and leadership qualities is a critical part of success. While change may be frightening, adapting to it is absolutely imperative if one is to continue as a successful salesperson. Effective programs emphasize building in-house capabilities - skilled staff that can be called upon to digitize processes quickly. Special workshops may help your employees to develop the soft skills necessary to thrive in the digital age. Keeping the professional development of your workforce continuous is becoming increasingly important in a world of constant renovation and change.

Rapid and efficient innovation is the key to succeeding in such a world, and creativity is the fuel. Leaders today must become generators of cutting-edge ideas. They advocate transparency, keep their customers engaged and find new ways to rejuvenate their people, focus on their skills development, engage them and get them back into the center of innovation.

Becoming a true digital organization means embracing a new culture and mindset, where hierarchy fades and innovation happens through networks. Managers and employees will need to navigate the digital frontier together, and this requires a new set of leadership skills. Ultimately, success in the digital age lies not in the efficiency of technology, but in the dexterity and adaptability of the people who wield it.