
The future of selling

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worldwide

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The lifeblood of business

All of us are salespeople. We may sell products or services, or we may sell ideas. Perhaps we sell visions, opportunities, opinions, or just our value. But every time we aim to shape another person's point of view, we are selling.

When it comes to business, selling is crucial. Selling is the lifeblood of any business; it is the crankshaft of economic interaction. Our founder, David Ogilvy, understood this well. He put it succinctly: "We sell, or else." David was a salesman, selling stoves door-to-door to feed himself as a young man, and while his walk-and-knock-driven skills may seem to have lost their relevance in our social, digital world, OgilvyOne believes that selling is more important now than ever before. The discrete seller-buyer interaction that ruled the world of David's youth has given way to a complex web of interactions — master one skill and another two appear.

To get ahead of this, we called in an army of enthusiasts and experts. We challenged the world to sell a red brick in our search for the World's Greatest Salesperson and memorialized the insights from the victors. We asked 1,000 sales professionals in the US, UK, Brazil and China what they saw as the future of selling. And then we married those findings to the wisdom of 30 world-class experts to create this, a 21st Century Selling Guide. We learned that successful selling will always remain centered on the customer, but the successful salesperson will anticipate the customer's changing behavior.

The World's Greatest Salesperson

We set out to find out how selling has changed in the years since David Ogilvy's stove-shilling days. Rather than rely on what we thought we knew or just the testimony of business school professors, we thought we'd ask the people who really know the selling business: salespeople.

The best salespeople are people who build real relationships.

TONY HSIEH
Zappos.com, Inc.

Great selling means connecting what you have with somebody's desires.

ALEX SHOOTMAN
Eloqua

Good selling gives people the emotional inclination to choose.

DRAYTON BIRD
Direct marketing legend and author

I look for people who can analyze the customer's needs and find a way to solve their problems.

MACK HANAN
Author and business growth consultant

As part of that effort, Ogilvy embarked on a mission to uncover the secrets of great selling. To do so, we challenged the world to perform a simple task, selling a plain red brick, and to post their pitch on YouTube in a two-minute video. Hundreds of people from all over the world took up the challenge, and through a combination of an expert panel and live voting at the Cannes Advertising Festival, we selected the World's Greatest Salesperson, Todd Herman. We were pleasantly surprised to learn that even though everything about selling has evolved, the anatomy of an ideal salesperson remains unchanged.

The anatomy of a salesperson

The things that make Todd Herman great are the same things that have driven salespeople to succeed for decades.

But since he is at the apex of his profession today, his anatomy should be our guide.

Fortunately, no dissection was necessary as

Todd willingly gave us a rundown on the six things that a great salesperson must be:

1. Empathetic: Selling requires you to get out of your own needs and desires and into the mind of your customer.
2. Problem Solver: Problem solving consists of two parts. The first, problem finding, entails asking good questions aimed at uncovering and defining whatever is hampering the customer's experience. In problem shaping, the next step, the salesperson asks questions that frame the issue in such a way that the solution you offer is the logical choice.

3. **Communicator:** Of course great salespeople have all the hallmarks of superior conversational skills: eye contact, listening and questioning ability, and clear body language. However, they also have the ability to inspire and motivate with great clarity of message.
4. **Trustworthiness:** Customers rate you on your ability to deliver on what you've promised. While it sounds easy, you can differentiate yourself simply by doing what you said you were going to.
5. **Beer-worthiness:** Success in selling depends on having the social skills and cast of personality that make your customers look forward to spending time with you.
6. **Relentlessly energetic:** If you love your product, if you feel like an evangelist for what you have on offer, then you won't rest until you've given everyone an opportunity to be a customer. Anything else would be unfair, and it is that mind-set that gives great salespeople the fire to keep going.



Buying is changing

In the era of Facebook, Google and Twitter, TripAdvisor and Yelp, buyers have as much control over the flow of information as salespeople do. Buyers have more information than ever before and may have developed that knowledge long before a salesperson got into the picture.

Buying, once a one-way interaction between an informed seller and a curious buyer, has become a conversation between equals, and the revolution in buying behavior is still ongoing.

Buying is changing profoundly faster than sellers are responding. In great sales organizations, great people focus on the buying experience, not the selling experience.

DAVID BROCK
Partners in EXCELLENCE

The seller no longer commands information and price power. The customer is now in charge.

MACK HANAN
Author and business growth consultant

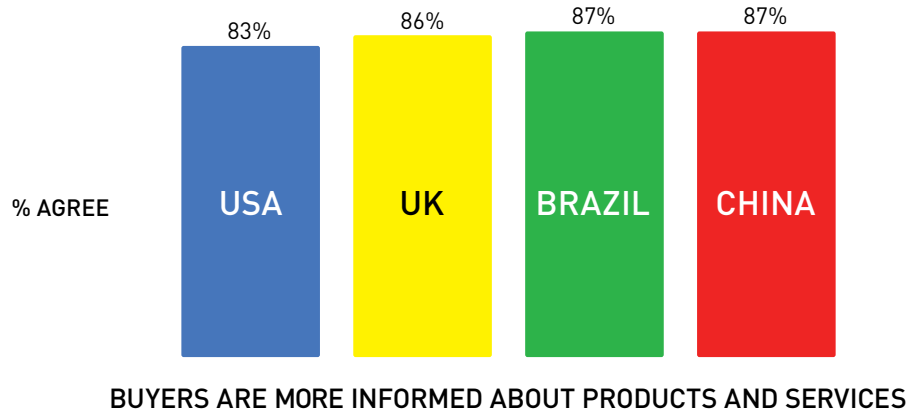
The mound of information available to the customer today significantly changes the power balance between the buyer and the seller.

RICHARD BRAVMAN
NCR Corporation

To find out just what was changing and why, we did research among selling professionals — over 1,000 of them in the US, UK, Brazil and China. Selling, 73% of our respondents told us, will be radically different in the next five years, and the key factor is information asymmetry.

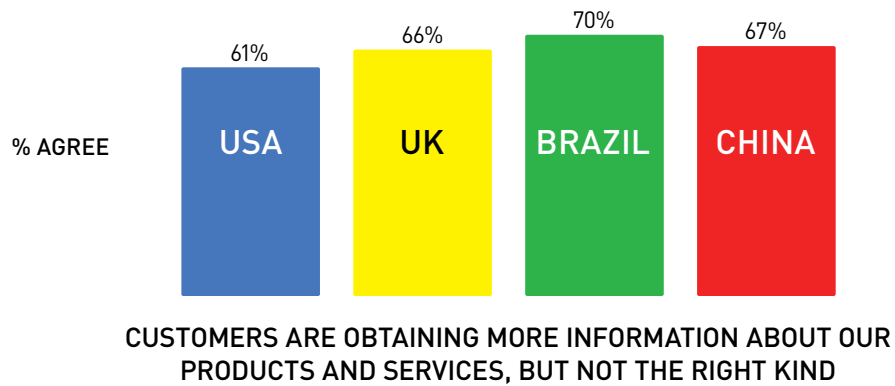
Buyers are getting more information than ever before, and they are less reliant on salespeople for it. But even though buyers are more informed, they are not necessarily better informed. The salesperson has little way of knowing if the buyer is at the beginning, middle or end of the customer journey. This ambiguity can play in your favor, however. Customers may have information, but they are lacking analysis. Salespeople can help them sort out what information is valuable and what is pure junk — no matter what stage of the buyer journey the customer is at.

THE CUSTOMER IS KING



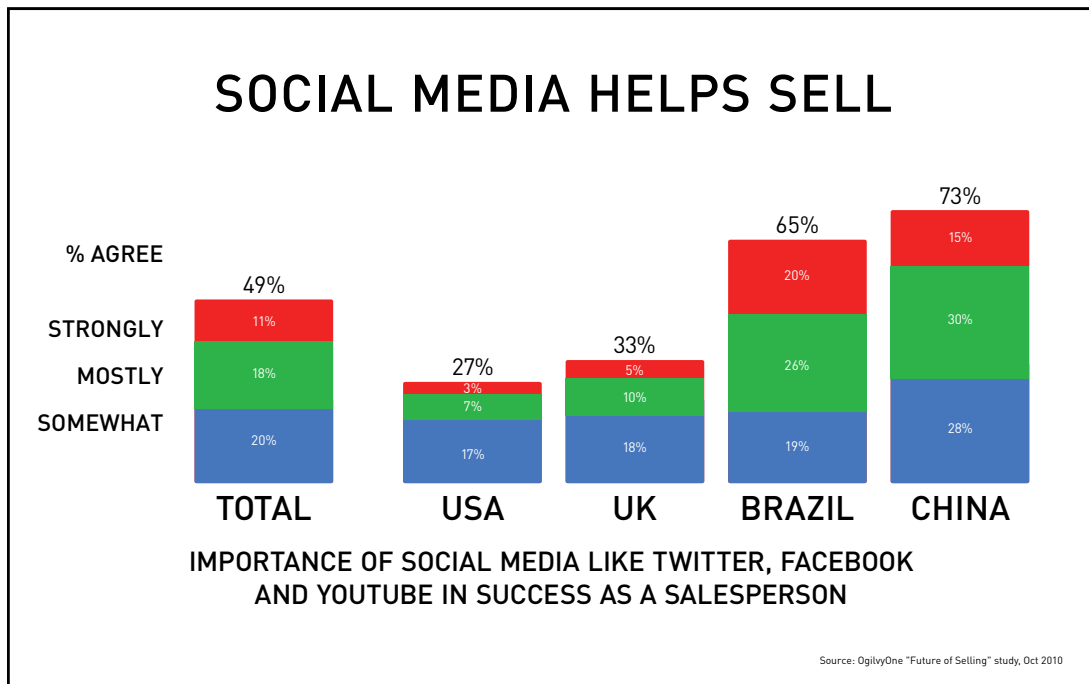
Source: OgilvyOne "Future of Selling" study, Oct 2010

MORE INFORMED, NOT BETTER INFORMED



Source: OgilvyOne "Future of Selling" study, Oct 2010

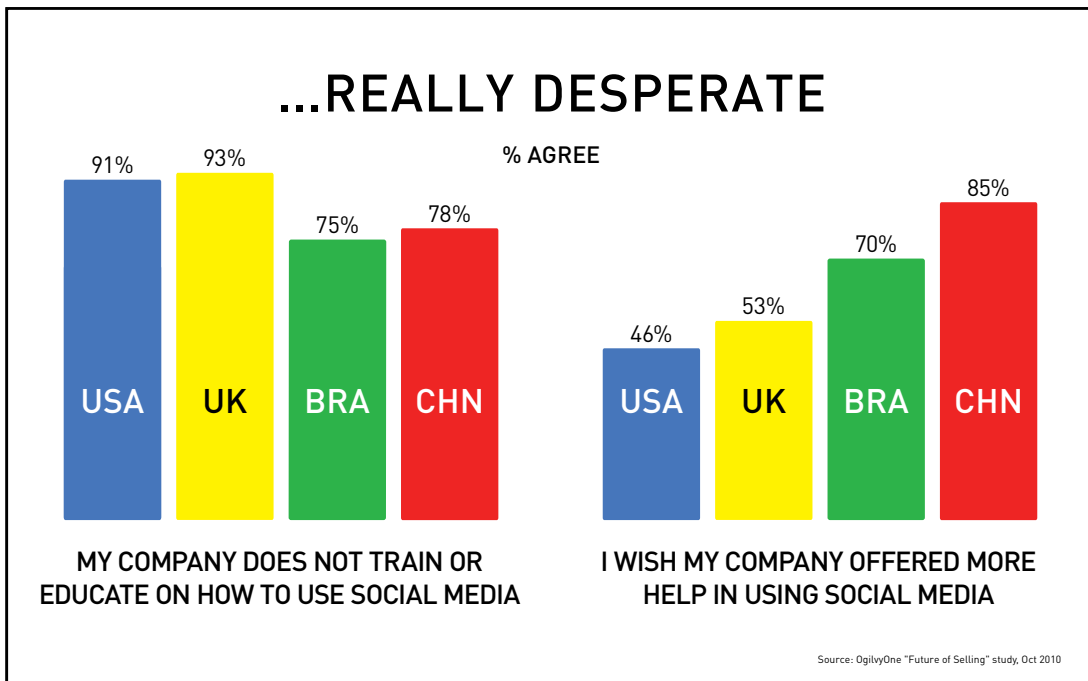
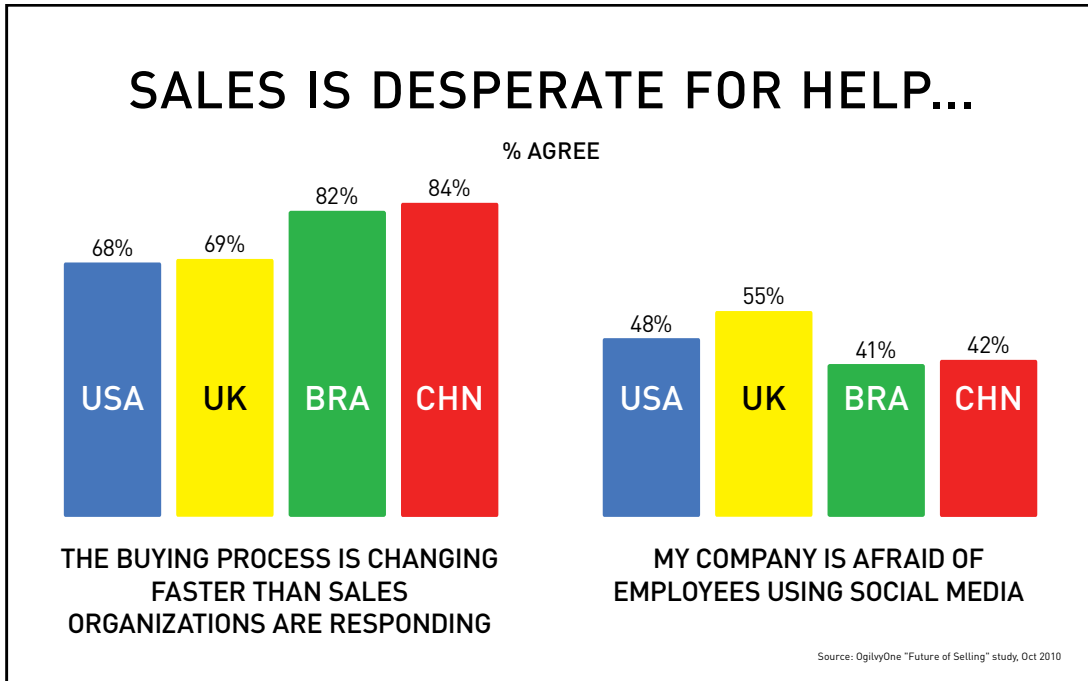
Social media has had an enormous impact on buying behavior. Thinking about it as digital word of mouth enables salespeople to appreciate just how crucial it is. Already 49% of sellers see social media as important to their success. In fact, top-performing salespeople already use social media to sell. 65% of the most successful salespeople believe social media is integral to their sales success. Our colleagues from the fast-growing emerging markets, predictably, find their customers even more willing to adopt social media than those in the mature markets – just as they are themselves. While only 28% of US salespeople think sales success depends on social media, 73% of salespeople in China believe this to be the case.



And just as predictably, companies are not adapting fast enough. It's always this way – the frontline troops know if the tide of battle is waxing or ebbing long before the battle planners in the rear. The salespeople see this wave coming, and they are desperate for help in riding it. Unfortunately, our panel of sales professionals believed that the selling process is changing faster than their own organizations are adapting to it. The salespeople we spoke to felt that their companies were not providing solid training in social media to sales professionals. In fact, many companies, they said, are actively discouraging the use of social media even though many of their customers are already shopping and buying that way.

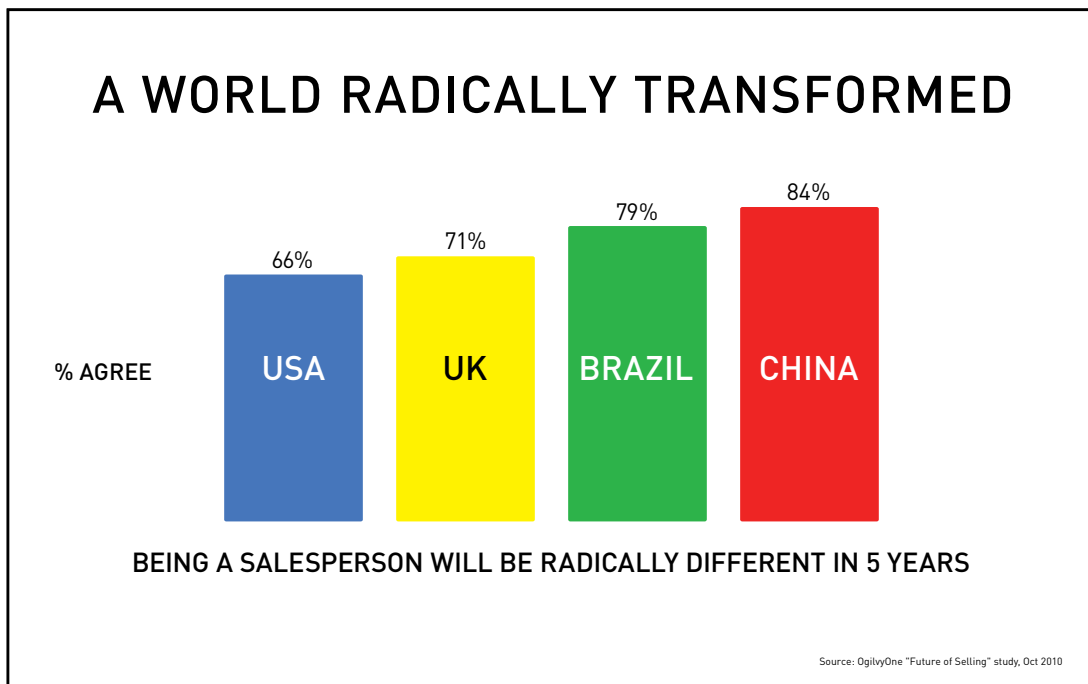
Not only that, but companies persist in actively restricting social media use. 48% of salespeople believe their companies are afraid of letting employees use social media. Once again, the fast-growing emerging markets have made more progress

in solving this dilemma than the US. Many US companies claim to have a social media strategy, but only 9% of US salespeople say their company trains or educates them on the use of social media for sales. This stands in stark contrast to Brazil, where 25% of salespeople surveyed receive training on social media usage. 38% of the salespeople we surveyed in China use personal blogs in their selling process while only 3% of US salespeople do the same.



Change or else— a 21st Century Selling Guide

If salespeople are to continue providing solutions to their customers, selling must evolve in lockstep with buying.



Buyers have moved ahead for now, but our quantitative and qualitative research has revealed several significant initiatives that salespeople can adopt in order to remain the ideal partner to an interested customer. Look closely and you'll see one thing that unites all of these new ideas: the centrality of the customer. This new world of distributed information doesn't loosen the focus on the buyer. If anything, it sharpens it; buyers are the authors and audience for their own sales scripts. Our job is to deliver what they want.

1. *New buyer journeys*

The AIDA Sales Funnel was invented in 1898 by Elias St. Elmo Lewis, and we have been using it ever since. It assumes that all customers begin at the same zero point and can be pushed or drawn through the funnel by the seller. While the Sales Funnel has served us well, it no longer reflects reality.

We have to make the transition from thinking about the sales process to thinking about the customer's buying journey.

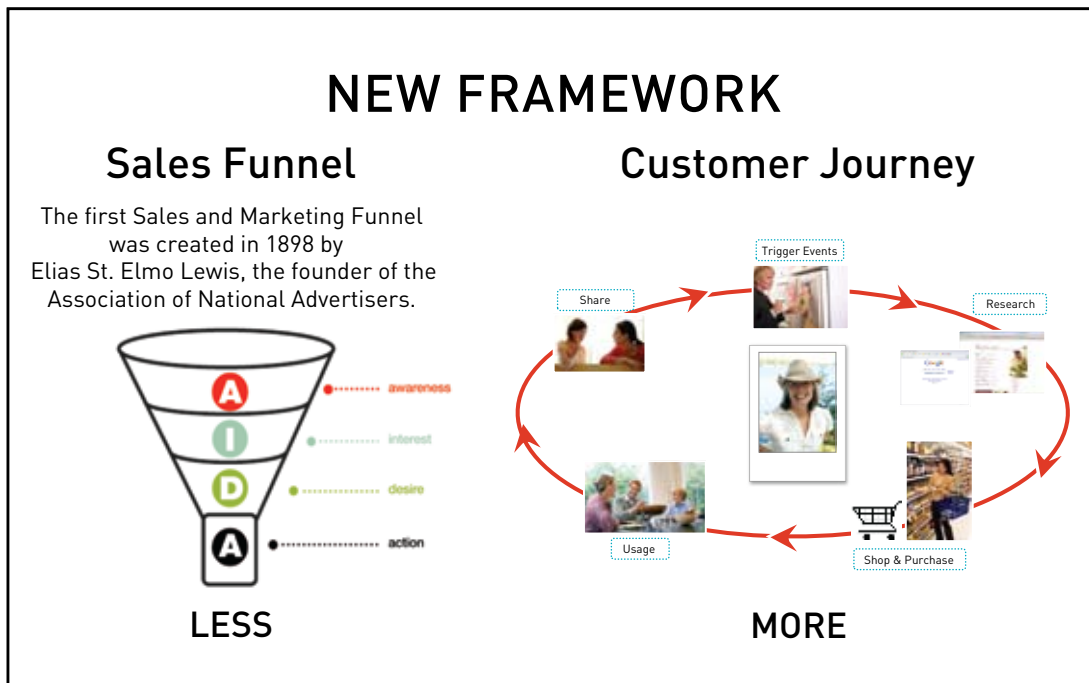
STEVE SOLAZZO
IBM global general business

Buyers come already prepared to buy what they have envisioned. They are not caught by surprise.

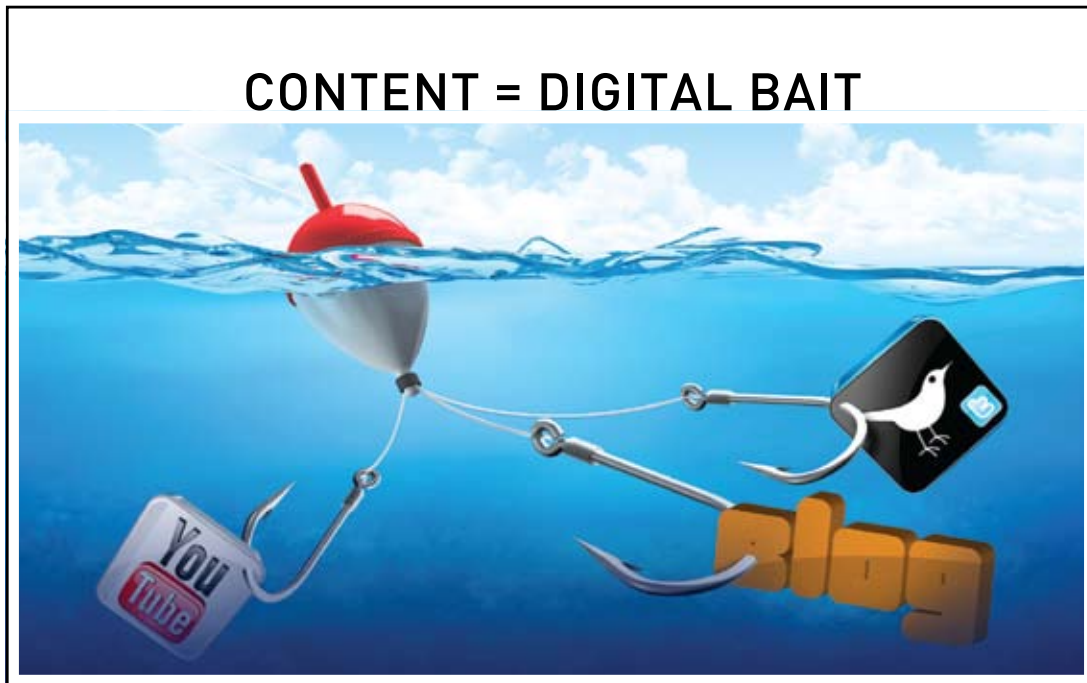
ANTONIO CARBONARI NETTO
Anhanguera Educacional S.A.

These days, customers create their own buyer journeys. They take many steps without the seller's involvement. They go forwards and backwards. And they may not always start at step one. A tremendous amount of action happens after the sale, especially when customers experience the brand and then share their experiences with others. Sometimes they will talk with a few friends and family, or perhaps they will self-cast their thoughts to hundreds, thousands or millions of others through social media. What was once a tidy funnel now looks like a mad scientist's chemistry set.

Salespeople need to find out exactly where their customers are in their journey right now and advise them on the best way to get where they're going.



2. *A new role for content: digital bait*



Content was once something that had a nicely chiseled-out niche in the sales process. We used it to articulate our messages or hype our benefits. Content was, to be blunt, copy. Now, we see a whole new role for content.

My philosophy, I.C.E.E., stands for Inspire, Connect, Educate or Entertain. I try to have each of the tweets I send out fall into those categories.

TONY HSIEH
Zappos.com, Inc.

There is a difference between chumming and fly-fishing.

ALEX SHOOTMAN
Eloqua

Don't hire marketers. Hire journalists. I love the concept of brand journalism.

DAVID MEERMAN SCOTT
Author, blogger, and speaker

In a disintermediated media world, customers are eager for professionally produced content, and we can use that desire to draw customers to our messages. In other words, we can use content as digital bait.

There are three main kinds of digital bait:

A. **Beliefs and Points of View:** Put out what your company believes and what it stands for. Not everybody will like it, but it will attract the kind of prospects already aligned with what you have to sell.

- B. Expertise: Customers and prospects are hungry for high-quality expert information. They want to be smart shoppers and to be informed. They appreciate factual expert opinions about the category and about you. They will generate this information with or without your involvement, and you would be well served by having a hand in creating their narrative.
- C. Invitations and Offers: You need to put invitations and offers in the water for your prospects to bite. Extending appealing digital content makes it easy for people to engage.

3. New listening skills: digital footprints



One thing hasn't changed: Customers have always telegraphed their intentions, and a smart seller knows how to read these signals. A wink, a smile, a twitch, folded arms, or a steadfast refusal to make eye contact have always made the buyer's real feelings clear to a sharp salesperson. These customer cues are still there, and they are still as revealing as ever. However, they have moved into the digital sphere.

I can walk into most calls now with a broad knowledge of the person on the other side of the desk.

JOHN CALLIES
Callies Management Consulting

Your customers and prospects are throwing off billions of digital buying indications every day. They signal their intentions through the search keywords they use, the blogs they read, the white papers they download, and the shopping baskets they fill.

I treat social networks as entry points into the way people want to do business, and not just consumers but B2B people too.

MACK HANAN
Author and business growth consultant

We're finally starting to discover how much social media affects and influences purchase behavior.

MARC LEWIS
School of Communication Arts 2.0

Our philosophy is to take the money we would have used on paid advertising and invest it into customer experience. The customers then do the marketing for us through word of mouth.

TONY HSIEH
Zappos.com, Inc.

They are leaving digital footprints for the savvy hunter to observe and act upon.

One such hunter is IBM, which used digital traces to create sales leads for their software group. They studied the exact language that IT buyers use in their searches about software topics and then custom designed a whole raft of inexpensive "how to" videos around these topics. IBM posted them on YouTube and tagged them with exactly the same words that buyers use when they search. Lead volume and quality increased. That's smart.

And it is proof that the smart sellers of the 21st century must be outstanding at systematically reading and responding to their customers' digital trails.

4. *New marketing skills: behavioral economics*

Some of the smartest 21st century sellers are discovering the power of behavioral economics. In its simplest form, behavioral economics is the study of how consumers make choices and the economic impact those choices have. It has been used in many forms in economics and policy-making and is now sharply on the rise in marketing. It combines the rational and emotional sides of buying decisions in an interesting and powerful way. Some examples:

A salesperson who caves when a customer says "No" will not be a successful salesperson. "No" is the first opportunity you have to begin to sell.

JOHN CALLIES
Callies Management Consulting

- Sometimes, increasing the price will increase sales volume, not reduce it.
- Consumers are irrationally biased toward the "middle" choices on a menu.
- Creating a convenient default option is one of the most effective ways to make a sale. Human inertia stands in the way of selling.
- Adding more choices often will result in fewer yeses, not more.

If I get someone who doesn't know how to spring back from a loss, that person's going to be useless.

JOHN HICKEY
Avoca Technologies

Our job as communicators is to persuade the consumer to take action, whatever the action is.

MARC LEWIS
School of Communication Arts 2.0

21st century marketing and sales organizations need to start understanding and deploying behavioral economics in their own businesses. What were once thought of as low-level tactics like designing offers and response mechanisms must be elevated to a rigorous science. There is a well-documented case of the US online retailer that discovered “the \$300 million button.” By redesigning a single button on their checkout procedure, the retailer lifted sales by \$300 million. In every business, behavioral economics can unlock millions — sometimes billions — of dollars in sales and profits.

5. A new way to sell: social selling

Whereas selling may have once been a lone-wolf activity by the road warrior, it is now more than ever a social enterprise. Great salespeople use all their allies to propel customers along the new buyer journeys to close a sale.

Information is the most important weapon for a salesperson, and it's no longer how you look in a suit but how your relationship is. You are helping your customer achieve strategic advantage with your technology and tools.

JIM STEELE
Salesforce.com

The only way to sell is via a consultative approach. You have to roll up your sleeves, dive into your customer's business and understand the issues.

JOHN HICKEY
Avoca Technologies

Follow-up activity and constant contact are the fundamental advantages that social media bring to a sales organization.

MATT GENTILE
Century 21 Real Estate LLC

To do this, Sales must collaborate with Marketing and work with customers to create solutions. Social media creates momentum and fits the new buyer journeys to a T.

And speaking of Ts, Ford is a perfect example of social selling in action. To launch the new 2010 Explorer, Ford created a community of advocates and enthusiasts online.

They shared their plans for the new model, previewed the car, and gave their fans first dibs on seeing and test-driving the new model. They looped in dealers in 11 major cities, getting them excited about the new vehicle and ready to take preorders.

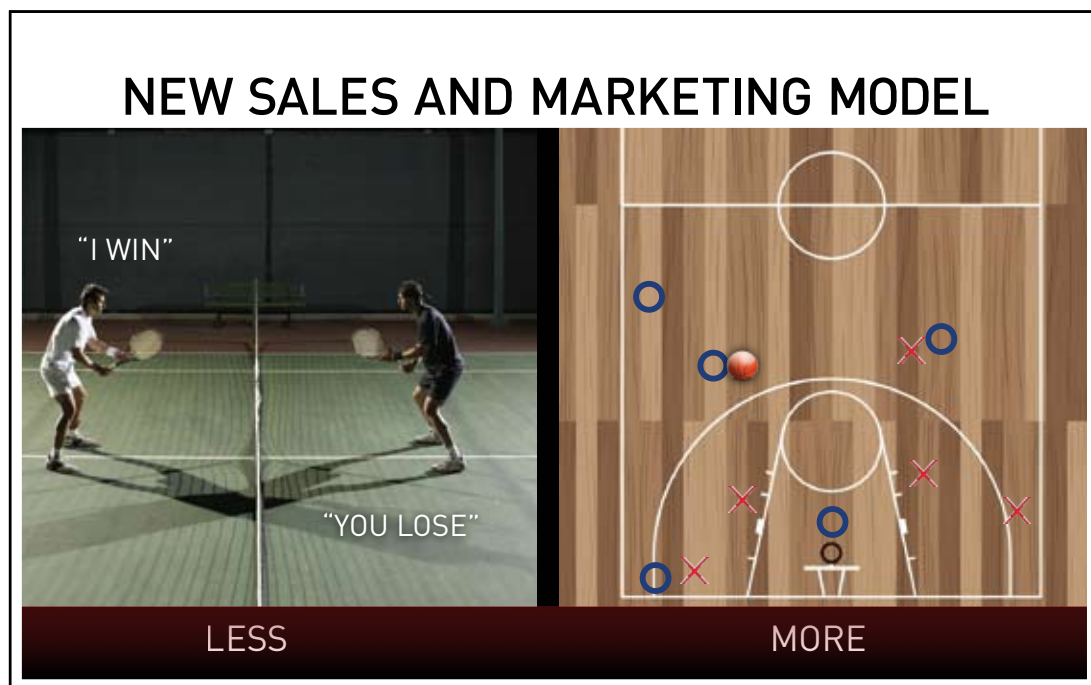
It worked. Ford Explorer preorders far exceeded the target. Ford boasted 10,000 Explorer orders in the system over a month before full production, which eclipsed the hugely successful Fiesta and Taurus lines for preorders.

Facebook, once a toy for teenagers, has emerged as a global colossus with 500 million members and 130 million mobile members, but until recently few people bothered to exploit its power as a selling platform. That's starting to change, and great salespeople will be in the vanguard of this change, not the rear echelon.

Salespeople complain their organizations have been laggard in supporting social selling, and that is generally true. However, a few notable corporations have embraced the potential of the social sale.

Procter & Gamble — one of the world's most ROI-savvy marketers — just announced that they would begin selling twenty-nine of their top brands on a Facebook e-commerce store. Twenty-nine P&G brands could easily do \$1 billion in e-commerce from Facebook in the next year. That's quite a status update.

6. A new partnership: selling is a team sport



Just as sellers are collaborating with buyers in new ways, Sales and Marketing need a new arrangement. In the words of Richard Bravman from NCR, “The relationship between Sales and Marketing needs to be less like tennis, a win-lose match over a barrier, and more like basketball, where a team with different skills works together, passing and moving into optimal position, to achieve the unified purpose of scoring points.”

You can almost envision the employee of the future becoming less of a product expert and more like a librarian. You can assume that the librarian hasn't read every book but knows where to find it or who a particular expert would be on a topic.

JOHN BERNIER
Best Buy

A great marketer can't sell his way out of a paper bag and a great salesperson doesn't know what the heck marketing is. When you try to put them together and neither one knows who is leading, you're setting them up to fail.

AMILYA ANTONETTI
Entrepreneur, speaker, and author

Salespeople are paid to honor the dollar and respect the brand, but marketers are paid to honor the brand and respect the dollar.

DAN LOVINGER
MTV Networks

You have to make it in Sales's interest for Marketing to do a better job and in Marketing's interest for Sales to improve. You have to bring them together.

DRAYTON BIRD
Direct marketing legend and author

The rules of this sport, however, are far from settled law. Who should lead and who should follow? Should Marketing join Sales in having a quota? Regardless of the uncertainties, one thing is clear: successful selling requires new and deeper collaboration.

And not just collaboration with Marketing departments. All of these new initiatives—new buyer journeys, digital bait, digital footprints— are dependent on solid partnerships. Selling may have once been an individual event, but it is now a team sport.

Great salespeople use all their compatriots to propel customers along the journey and close a sale. Sales collaborates with Marketing; Sales uses social media to create momentum; Sales works with customers to create solutions.

Your 30-day plan

Now, let us leave you with five things you can do in the next 30 days.

1. Walk in the buyers' footprints.
 - Write down the exact journey you followed to make the last three big purchases in your personal life.
 - What role did a live salesperson play?
 - What role did the media play, including search and social media?
 - Do the same for your business: Talk to the last three people who bought from you. Exactly how did they buy? Write it down. Draw the journey.
 - Do you have an arsenal of great offers and a systematic way to personalize them?
2. Use digital bait.
 - Can you make a compelling two-minute YouTube video?
 - Do you tell people what you stand for?
 - Are you providing true expertise and category insights for your buyers and helping them make good choices?
3. Sell something using social media. Maybe it's something simple like an upcoming event or more complicated like a new product. The important thing is to try it and then to measure it.
4. Get Marketing and Sales into the same room. Take half a day and share a heart-to-heart session.
 - Are you on the same page?
 - What more can Marketing do for Sales?
 - What more can Sales do for Marketing?
 - How can you turn the tennis opponents into a winning basketball team?
5. Join the new selling conversation.

This is the most important time in the history of Marketing and Sales. Buying has changed dramatically, and we as sellers have fallen behind — so far. But our customers want us to catch up. They depend on us, especially as they try to navigate a confusing new world awash in more information than they can handle.

Our customers are not hiding from us, hoping that we don't notice their confusion or their footprints as they search for answers. Quite the opposite. They are giving off their digital trails as transparently as a young single in a pickup bar, praying that we catch on. It's time we did.

About the author



Brian Fetherstonhaugh
Chairman & CEO
OgilvyOne Worldwide

Brian has a unique vantage point on how brands are built, how corporate cultures are created, and what happens as the world goes digital.

In the course of the past 25 years, Brian has worked hands-on with many of the world's leading brands, including IBM, American Express, Cisco, Coca-Cola, Motorola, Unilever, and Nestlé.

Brian began his career in brand management with Procter & Gamble Canada. He then joined the advertising firm Ogilvy & Mather and rose up through the ranks to become President of its Canadian operations.

In 1997, Brian moved to New York and to the worldwide stage. His first assignment was to lead Ogilvy's flagship global account, IBM, through its dramatic repositioning as an "e-business." He later founded and became the first Chairman of Ogilvy's Global Brand Community, representing the agency's top 20 international clients, and was appointed to the Ogilvy Executive Committee in 2002.

Today, Brian leads OgilvyOne Worldwide, the interactive marketing and consulting arm of the Ogilvy Group. With more than 4,000 staff in 50 countries, OgilvyOne is at the forefront of the digital revolution. Several major innovations have come to life under Brian's leadership. In February 2006, Neo@Ogilvy, the agency's full-service, global digital media and search capability, was launched; within one year it was named as one of the *Wall Street Journal's* "Agencies to Watch." In March 2008, the Ogilvy Digital Labs network, with hubs in Singapore, New York, Beijing, London and São Paulo, was established to create innovative digital experiences that build brands and results.

For further information

Contact Brian Fetherstonhaugh at brian.fetherstonhaugh@ogilvy.com. Come visit us at sellorelse.ogilvy.com. Follow us on Twitter @ [@sell_or_else](https://twitter.com/sell_or_else). See what the experts have to say and share your thoughts and experience. We even have a free Marketing and Sales Social Media Audit form that you can customize and use for your own company.

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Our expert panel

Greg Alexander
CEO of Sales Benchmark Index, author, and “Sales Manager of the Year”
in 2004

Amilya Antonetti
Entrepreneur, speaker, author, and national media personality

John Bernier
Digital Product Line Manager, Social Media Steward–Emerging Platforms
at Best Buy and pioneer of Twelpforce

Drayton Bird
Direct marketing legend and author of *Commonsense Direct and Digital Marketing*

Greg Bradley
SVP of Sales and US Operations for GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare

Richard Bravman
CMO and VP of Corporate Development at NCR Corporation

David Brock
Blogger and sales and marketing consultant, President and CEO at Partners
In EXCELLENCE

John Callies
President, Callies Management Consulting

Antonio Carbonari Netto
Founder and President of Anhanguera Educacional S.A.

Brian Clark
Founder of *Copyblogger*, one of the world’s 50 most powerful blogs

David Fischer
VP of Advertising and Global Operations at Facebook

Matt Gentile
Director of PR & Social Media at Century 21 Real Estate LLC

Jen Groover
Media mogul, entrepreneur, lifestyle contributor, and author

Mack Hanan
Author of *Consultive Selling*, business growth consultant

John Hickey
Cofounder and VP of Sales at Avoca Technologies

Tony Hsieh
CEO of Zappos.com, Inc. and author

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Director of Sales for CDW Healthcare, Inc.

Marc Lewis
Dean of School of Communication Arts 2.0

Dan Lovinger
SVP of Sales & Integrated Marketing for MTV Networks

David Meerman Scott
Best-selling author, blogger, and speaker

Alex Shootman
SVP of Worldwide Sales of Eloqua, known for “Getting It Done”
and “Doing It Right”

Steve Solazzo
GM of IBM Global General Business

Jim Steele
Chief Customer Officer for Salesforce.com

Don Tapscott
Author of *Wikinomics* and 12 other best-selling books

Barry Trailer
Cofounder of CSO Insights, author and consultant

Dan Waldschmidt
Edgy inspirator, sales motivator, and editor of the blog *Edge of Explosion*

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