

**10 ESSENTIAL STRATEGIES TO PROSPECT, POSITION
AND PRESENT USING SOCIAL MEDIA**



SOCIAL SELLING

TOM ABBOTT

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Social Selling:

10 Essential Strategies to Prospect, Position
and Present using Social Media

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Preface

Ten years ago, when I was learning to use social media for selling, I could have used a book like this one. With this in mind, I wrote this book for you.

In my experience of working with top sales professionals and business owners from all over the world, I have observed some best practices for selling through social media. I have identified ten essential strategies, which fall under three category stages: prospecting, positioning, and presenting.

Each chapter of this book explores one of these key strategies. I open by defining the principle, explain its importance and list its benefits, and then I set out the primary ambitions to keep in mind when applying it, as well as pointing out some of the pitfalls and commonly made errors. I debunk popular myths related to the topic, and outline current trends and make suggestions for how they may be put to use. I close each chapter with a proposed action that will help you to put into practice what you've just read, so that you can apply these strategies to your process and start making sales with social media, long before you finish reading the book.

I'll be guiding you through the strategies in a specific order that I would like you to follow. Each strategy builds upon the last one,

so they are best approached as a series of steps. If you feel you've already mastered the social selling practice that's covered in any particular chapter, you are welcome to skip ahead; however, I would still encourage you to carry out the task outlined at the end of that chapter.

Please visit our website, at www.socialsellingprogram.com, to check out our videos and blog posts that will reinforce everything you've learned in this book, and speed you towards your goals.

My hope for every reader of this book is that you'll soon be using social selling to generate leads, stand apart from the competition, and close deals more quickly and easily than ever before.

—T. A.
Singapore
April 8th, 2015

Introduction

There has never been a better time to be working in sales. Ever since the onset of the social media revolution, buyers are able to connect with brands at any hour of the day or night. At this very moment, your future customers are online, learning about you and your competitors.

Statistics show that 61% of Internet users worldwide research products online, and that social media has a 100% higher lead-to-close rate than outbound marketing does.¹

Adopting social media in selling increases the scope of your influence by making it possible for you to cast a wider net. You can reach an unlimited number of prospects from all over the world and present them with reasons for choosing to approach your company. Social selling engages your social networks at every stage of the sales process. While it hasn't replaced the fundamentals of sales, it has helped them to evolve. Sales professionals and business owners are able to directly engage with future customers without having to pick up the phone. You no longer have to purchase client lists, make cold calls or make your way past the gatekeepers.

It's clear that social media has changed the way customers buy. Have you changed the way you sell? If you haven't yet established

a social media presence, it's time to get started. And, if you have already started, are you taking the right approach?

We are faced with so many choices: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Vimeo, SlideShare, Quora, Instagram, Snapchat and Periscope, just to name a few. Many people think that it's simply a question of joining all of these platforms and posting a few inspirational photo quotes. Post it, and they will come! Right? I wish it were that easy.

The truth is, just as with traditional selling, social selling requires more than luck. You will have to invest time and thought into the process. If you're new to the game, before you start to look for the answers, you'll need to figure out which questions you should be asking in the first place. The primary ambitions of this book are: to help you to increase your awareness of how social media operates; to understand how your customers engage with their favourite networks; and to form a viable strategy using this knowledge.

Moving forward, I'll conclude this introduction with a ten-point summary that I hope will start to demystify the topic of social selling. We'll look at the five most common misconceptions that hold people back from adopting social selling, and reveal the facts that debunk these myths; and I'll answer the five most frequently asked questions about social selling. Then I'll wrap up with some statistics that demonstrate the efficacy of social selling. In the 'Getting Started' section, I'll briefly describe the most popular social media platforms, and then we'll launch straight into the book. Let's get started!

Five myths about social selling

Myth: *You can reach prospects without having an online presence.*

Fact: 89% of all purchases, and 75% of B2B purchases, begin with an online search.²

Myth: *Having a website is perfectly sufficient.*

Fact: 82% of the world's population is reached via social networking sites,³ and 83% of marketers say that social media plays a significant role in their business.⁴

Myth: *Social media is for marketing, not for sales.*

Fact: Of sales teams who use social selling, 64% reach their sales quotas, while of teams who do not employ social selling, 49% reach their sales quotas. Teams who've adopted social selling receive 15% more repeat business.⁵

Myth: *It's a waste of time to join discussion groups.*

Fact: 40% of customers report using LinkedIn groups to vet their decisions.⁶

Myth: *Cold-calling is the most effective way to reach prospects.*

Truth: The average sales rep makes eight cold calls before getting through to the right contact, while 63% of B2B decision makers engage with vendors on social media.⁷

Five FAQs about social selling

Q: Which social media platform provides the most effective means to reach prospects?

A: The answer to this question will differ according to your target customer. The most effective platforms to sell on are the ones your customers are using.

Q: How can we effectively measure closing rates?

A: Use bit.ly links on your posts to track referral sources, and analyse the data in your CRM to measure closing rates.

- Q: How can I increase my following on social media?
- A: Promote your social media pages and profiles on all collaterals. Invite your e-mail contacts to connect with you on social media.
- Q: How can I successfully generate enquiries and leads?
- A: Generate leads by offering something of value whenever you present a call-to-action
- Q: How can I use social media without alienating my audience or making them feel that I am spamming them?
- A: Don't interrupt the conversation with sales messages. Join in the discussion, and talk about things that matter to the users.

Performance benefits of social selling

Let's compare the results acquired by sales teams who employ social selling with those of all others. The following statistics have been taken from a whitepaper sourced by Aberdeen Group and published by Hootsuite:⁸

	Teams who use social selling	Teams who do not use social selling
Total team attainment of sales quota	64%	49%
Customer renewal rate	55%	48%
Sales forecast accuracy	54%	42%
Sales reps achieving quota	46%	38%

Jill Rowley, Social Selling Evangelist at Oracle, sums it up perfectly: 'Before LinkedIn and other social networks, in the sales world, ABC stood for Always Be Closing. Now, ABC means Always Be Connecting, because your connections lead to your next lead and your next close.'⁹

Getting Started

Before we begin, let's take a few moments to familiarise ourselves with the most popular social media platforms and to find out a little bit about the people who are using each of them.

Facebook

This is one of the most effective platforms on which to conduct B2C (business-to-customer) marketing, and that's why 97% of B2C marketers use Facebook.¹⁰ While 77% of B2C companies report having acquired customers from Facebook, only 43% of B2B companies report having done so.¹¹ Facebook users make up 71% of all adults who go online, and 58% of the total adult population.¹² Most of the people who use Facebook are there to connect with friends and family, and to share interesting stories, articles, and photos. They are socially and emotionally motivated, and they're there to seek entertainment. In 2015, 29.7% of Facebook users are between the ages of 25 and 34, and 53% of its users are female and 47% are male.¹³

LinkedIn

Recruitment and content-sharing platform used primarily for business networking. A recent analysis of 100,000+ posts on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+ showed that 80% of B2B leads were generated via LinkedIn.¹⁴ People use this platform when searching for jobs, suppliers, and other business solutions. LinkedIn users like to publish and share articles, write and post status updates, and connect with business professionals who can add value to their networks. Studies show that 88% of B2B and 59% of B2C marketers use LinkedIn.¹⁵ Half of all college graduates use LinkedIn, and 28% of all adults who use the Internet are on LinkedIn.¹⁶ The biggest demographic is made up of people aged between 30 and 49. LinkedIn is the only major social network on which male users outnumber female users.¹⁷

Twitter

Content-sharing platform designed for instant delivery of news and tips in posts composed of 140 or fewer characters. As well as following friends and contacts, Twitter users like to follow thought leaders, celebrities, and media brands. They're seeking entertainment and information. The tweet may be a message within itself, or the tweet may contain a link to an article or blog post. When linking to external content, it's a good idea to use bit.ly, as you'll be able to track the engagement with your post. Also, by shortening the link, you maximise the 140-character allowance. If your followers like your content, they can easily share it with their own followers at the click of a button. This is known as a retweet, and it helps expand your reach, by conveying your message and leading other users back to your profile so they can also follow you. If you prefix any keywords in your tweet with the hash or pound (#) sign, it

becomes a hashtag, making your tweet more easily searchable and thereby increasing your reach. Twitter's biggest age demographic is made up of users between the ages of 18 and 29; and while 22% of all men use Twitter, only 15% of women use it.¹⁸

Google+

Google+ has 340 million active users, making it the world's second largest social network.¹⁹ It combines the social atmosphere of Facebook with the business-oriented style of LinkedIn, and it's a lot like many other content-sharing platforms, but with a few significant differences. When you post a status update, it appears in Google search results, which helps to increase your visibility and reach. It's linked to Googlemaps, which helps to connect your company profile with any reviews and other information. Google+ users tend to be more technically savvy than the users of other platforms, and they have a strong sense of community. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 make up the biggest percentage (42%) of the total of its UK users, and it's estimated that 35% of Google+ UK users are single,²⁰ which renders it particularly suitable for selling certain services and products.

Instagram

An image-driven site on which users post personal photos of various things, including food, scenery. They may also post selfies. It's common to see half a dozen hashtags included in a photo's caption, as hashtags are used to tell part of the story and to help other users search for and locate images according to their interests. Of B2C marketers, 34% use Instagram, as compared with 19% of B2B marketers.²¹ The audience is young and enjoys engaging with a personal or brand story through primarily visual language. Of

people between the ages of 18 and 29, 53% use Instagram; and more women than men use Instagram.²²

Pinterest

Photo-sharing platform with an emphasis on lifestyle interests, including DIY projects, crafts, food, fashion, art, travel, beauty, and interior design. Users create boards, and they pin photos to these boards, which can be **repinned** by other users, who wish to share these pins with their own networks. Pinterest is the third most popular social media platform. Of all women who go online, 42% are Pinterest users, as compared with 13% of men who go online; and customers who have come through Pinterest are 10% more likely to make a purchase than those referred by other social networks. Customers who come to your site through Pinterest will spend 70% more than those who come via non-social networks.²⁴

SlideShare

Users may upload, and publicly or privately share, PowerPoint presentations, Keynote presentations, PDF documents, slides, and more. Users can also create presentations (or decks) within the platform to share with other users. This platform is popular with speakers, trainers, coaches, authors, and other thought leaders, who want to share content and ideas that will inform and educate their audiences. The content can be filed under categories, which include: technology, education, design, entertainment, finance, and business; and it can be tagged with keywords, the most popular ones being: business, statistics, social media, market, trends, and research.²⁵ SlideShare receives 500% more traffic from business owners than does Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn,²⁶ making it the ideal platform for B2B.

YouTube

YouTube reaches more adults living in the US and aged between 18 and 34 than any cable network.²⁷ That's why 72% of B2B marketers are using it to increase brand awareness and lead generation.²⁸ On YouTube, you can upload, edit, and share videos with family, friends, and the rest of the world. This content appears in Google search results, which increases visibility. Users watch YouTube videos to be entertained and educated, so the most popular YouTube videos are funny clips and tutorials. YouTube has also become the world's second biggest search engine.²⁹

Prospect

Chapter 1

Find Your Audience

There are so many social media platforms out there—Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Facebook, SlideShare, Instagram—it’s enough to make your head spin. Rather than spreading yourself thin by trying to be everywhere at once, it would be more effective to take a targeted approach. Find out which platforms are frequented by the majority of your customers, and establish a strong presence on these particular platforms.

Each social network has its own personality and preferred mode of communication, and your potential clients are likely to flock to the platforms that are best suited to their tastes and interests. It’s crucial to identify your prospective audience’s preferred platforms and the most effective language to use on each one. Otherwise you may invest a lot of time and effort into launching a social media initiative on a particular platform, only to discover that your target customer isn’t active on this platform.

As the number of social networks continues to grow, it’s becoming increasingly difficult to determine which platforms your customers are using. And when you join a social media platform, you don’t always know how many—if any—of your customers are actually using it.

I've always been an early adopter, and I remember opening accounts on many of the major social media platforms. The problem was that I found myself talking to an audience that wasn't there. I was posting in the hope that people would see my updates and interact with me, but that wasn't the case. I had massive fails early on with Tumblr and Flickr, because I didn't truly understand these platforms. My key audience doesn't use these platforms, so although I frequently posted what I hoped was great content, no one saw it on these networks. Of those who did see my posts, no one interacted with the posts or engaged with me, because my content didn't resonate with the audience on these particular platforms.

Eventually, I came to realise that my potential audience is elsewhere. My key audience is made up of sales professionals, sales leaders and business owners, who are interested in the topics of sales and social selling. This sector prefers to network online on particular platforms, including LinkedIn and Twitter.

Once I'd had this epiphany, everything became so much easier. Now that I'm using the right platforms, I'm reaching the right people. My company has thousands of followers on Facebook, thousands of connections on LinkedIn, and hundreds of followers on Twitter. Potential clients, having viewed my profile and read my status updates, make contact with me, wanting to find out how I can help their companies to benefit from using social media. I've formed a stronger relationship with my audience.

Where are *your* customers?

Once you've found your audience, it's time to develop a social media selling strategy. I have found that the most effective way to achieve success in social selling is to consistently reach a large

number of one's target clientele. I achieved this by identifying the top three social media platforms used by my target customer base and concentrating my efforts on these three platforms.

Why should you focus on three platforms? Using only one platform is risky and time-consuming. You'd be putting all of your eggs in one basket. Using more than three platforms can place a considerable strain on your resources of time and money. Concentrating on your potential clientele's top three platforms is ideal, as it requires a manageable effort, and you are more likely to stay focused on the task at hand.

Why is consistency an essential element of a successful social media campaign? Unless you exert a consistent effort, your business or product will soon be drowned out by all the other noise. It's not enough to hit the jackpot with one promoted post on Facebook. Spending hundreds of dollars on a one-hit strategy will not guarantee a positive return on your investment. Similarly, I wouldn't recommend joining a discussion group on LinkedIn unless you are prepared to commit to regular interaction and participation. It is not adequate to make one or two good comments every so often. Your audience must come to view you as a consistent and credible presence before they will trust your message.

Aiming to reach a large number of people makes the best use of your time. The more prospects you reach, the sooner you'll achieve your sales targets. Joining your prospects' discussion groups affords you access to hundreds, if not thousands, of potential customers.

Your target audience may be found on any or all of the following platforms:

- Facebook
- LinkedIn

- Twitter
- Google+
- SlideShare
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Flickr
- Tumblr
- Quora
- YouTube
- Vimeo
- SnapChat
- Periscope
- WordPress or other blogging platform

When I began using social media, I didn't understand that each platform has its own language and culture, and a particular look and feel. Because I hadn't identified the subtle nuances of each platform, I had very little engagement with other users. After failing to connect with people on some of these platforms, I realised that certain platforms were better suited to my target clientele.

Once I had determined that most of my customers use LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube, I devoted my attention to developing a strong presence on these particular platforms. Whenever I delivered training courses and motivational keynote speeches, I would ask members of the audience about how I might best connect with them on social media. As well as allowing me to stay in contact with these potential clients, their answers provided clues as to where I could find more people like them.

Many people believe that you need to establish a presence on every social media platform. In fact, the opposite is true. It's worth spending the time and effort to establish a strong presence on one platform before venturing to the next. Another commonly made

mistake is to draw false conclusions about which platform is the best. For example, although Facebook is the largest social media platform, there's no guarantee that your target audience uses it. Nor can you be certain that your audience wants to be contacted on this particular platform. It's important to question your preconceptions and to ask your customers about their preferences. E-mail your top ten clients to ask them on which social media platforms they would like to connect with you.

Track your progress

Once you've started to concentrate your efforts on your target clientele's top three social media platforms, be sure to measure the results. Keep track of the number of status updates you make each week. Compare the number of conversations with the number of status updates. Take the number of appointments made and divide it by the number of sales. Take the number of conversations and multiply it by the average number of minutes spent on each conversation. Take the dollar amount in sales and divide it by the number of hours it took to make those sales. Measure and record your results during every step of the process. Tracking your progress allows you to gauge the effectiveness of each of your social media initiatives.

Build your network

Here are some quick tips to help you build your network on social media:

1. Include your social media handles and usernames in your e-mail signature.
2. Include your social media info on all marketing collaterals.

3. E-mail everyone in your database and ask them to connect with you on social media.
4. Accept every connection invitation request you receive.

One of the worst mistakes you can make when it comes to building your network is to be overly selective when it comes to making connections. I've heard people say that they connect only with people they have already met face-to-face. This greatly limits the potential reach of your network. Can you imagine going to a networking event and deciding to speak only with people you have met before? You would never meet anyone new, so you would never grow your network. In order to win at social selling, you should try to gain a large audience with whom to share your message. You should aim to connect with as many people as possible. In order to achieve this, I would encourage you to accept every invitation and connection request you receive. However, you may choose to decline requests from anyone without a photo and description on their profile.

Advanced people search

In order to expand your network, you can use tools on LinkedIn to search for people within specific industry sectors or by job title or other criteria. If you wish to connect with sales leaders in telecommunications, for example, conduct an advanced search using these terms as filters, in order to come up with a list of those people. See whether you share any mutual connections. Send each potential connection a personalised request.

When approaching people, make sure you do not come across like a salesperson. Attempt to connect with them in a tailored, personable manner. Explain why you wish to connect with them. Describe the kind of value you can offer them and their business. On Twitter,

search hashtags made up of key words in the respective industry sector. This will show you what users are saying about a particular topic, and it's a great way to identify your audience and connect with them. Similarly, you can use filters or search for groups on Facebook in order to find people belonging to specific demographic fields (such as interests, location or job title).

Action

Identify the top three methods for reaching a large number of your target customers. Review the social media platforms identified in this chapter. Determine which three platforms are preferred by your target clientele. Keep track of your time spent on these prospecting activities. Measure, record and analyse your results.

Chapter 2

Have Conversations with Prospects

Business owners and sales professionals are eager to promote their products and services to their customers. The problem is, in many cases, they haven't asked their customers first. Before you invest any more time and money into promoting the products that you love, you've got to find out what your customers love. If you've completed the Chapter 1 Action, you should have a good idea of where you can find your audience on social media.

The first step is to join discussions in which prospects are sharing their challenges and goals. Let's focus on having online conversations with prospects and allowing them to clarify their needs. It's time to embark on a fact-finding mission. Reach out to a minimum of three people in each of your top three social networks, and ask them the following questions:

1. What are the greatest challenges you face?
2. How are you trying to overcome those challenges?
3. Are you satisfied with the services provided by my competitors?
4. What other kinds of solutions are you seeking?

Fact-finding mission

The answers to the above questions will help you to work out whether your products and services can provide a solution to their challenges. The amount of effort you have to make in order to start the conversation will also give you some important information about your prospective customer base. You may have found that one or two of these markets are easier to reach than the others. This provides a very good indication of how challenging it will be to offer your products and services to a particular market.

If you're having difficulty establishing a conversation with someone in a particular sector, imagine how much more difficult it will be for you to actually get in front of them to make a sales presentation. On the other hand, if you find that when you try to make contact within a certain market, all of your direct messages and comments are answered, that's very encouraging.

If you find that a prospect is already doing business with someone else, don't be discouraged. Take this as a positive sign. It means that they've identified the challenges they're facing, and they're already spending money in an effort to find a solution. This is a good prospect, because the battle is already half-won. You will not need to convince them that they need to solve this problem, because they're already trying to solve it. All you have to do now is to demonstrate what makes you the ideal solution provider. (We'll cover this in further detail in Part 2: Positioning.)

You can initiate the discussion by asking the following questions:

1. What do you like about your current service provider?
2. How are they meeting your needs?

3. What are they doing well? And what are they doing not quite as well?

Try to get the prospect to provide specific answers to the questions. Take notes. You'll learn a lot about your market's needs and how best to satisfy these needs. But you won't know any of this unless you start the conversation. No one understands your customers' needs better than the customers themselves. All the time and money that you invest in promoting your products and services will be put to better use if you can get it right the first time.

Follow prospects and clients

Many people use social media solely as a broadcasting tool. They've forgotten the fundamentals of sales. You should be listening 80% of the time, asking questions 10% of the time, and promoting your products and services only 10% of the time. Social media is a noisy place, so instead of competing to see who can shout the loudest, try listening to your customer base.

Start by following nine of your top prospects and clients. Pay attention to what they're sharing. Interact with their posts or tweets. One of your clients just got promoted or moved to another company. Another client has launched a new product. Two of your clients have ventured into new markets. All of this information is incredibly useful and can add tremendous value to how you engage with them in the future. Sending a reply or direct message to a client to congratulate them on their latest news is way of letting them know that you're listening to them. By showing them that you're paying attention to their progress, you're strengthening your relationship with them, which may lead to future business.

Tag people

Tagging people in your posts and status updates is a great way to encourage engagement and increase the sharing of your posts. Be sure to tag the people you've mentioned in the post and those who are interested in the topic. On the other hand, unless you exercise some restraint, you may damage your relationships. Have you ever been tagged in a photo or post and wondered why the poster tagged you? When that happens to me, I always untag myself and scold the offender. Sometimes I'll even unfriend them. Before you tag someone, always ask yourself whether that person will be interested in what you've shared.

Hashtags

Including hashtags on your posts makes them more searchable, which can help you to reach a wider audience. You can also use hashtags to find status updates and posts on topics that are relevant to your brand. Engaging with other people's content can help you to make new connections, expanding your social network. Hashtag usage differs from platform to platform, and unless you follow the accepted protocol, it will look as if you're a newbie on the platform you're using, so pay attention to how other people are using them and follow suit.

Hashtags are to be used sparingly on Facebook and LinkedIn. Twitter users may include up to three hashtags per tweet. It's common to see a dozen hashtags on Instagram posts.

Discussions

You can join discussion groups on Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+ to connect with likeminded people who are interested in specific topics. Comment on other people's posts or start a new discussion. On LinkedIn, users who belong to groups and participate in discussions receive four times as many profile views, so it's a great way to get noticed.

Many people make the mistake of posting promotional material in groups. This is seen as spamming and may result in your being removed from the group. Resist the temptation to start selling right away. Instead, try to engage in meaningful discussions. Doing so will help you to build relationships and position yourself as a thought leader.

Another common mistake is to join only the groups in which you have a personal interest. If you're hoping to build relationships with current and prospective customers, consider joining groups that are of interest to them. On LinkedIn, each member's profile lists the groups to which they belong. By joining more groups, you'll learn more about your prospects' greatest challenges and meet more people like them. When joining groups, remember the 80/20 rule: 80% are of interest to your prospects and 20% are of personal interest to you.

Action

Your task is to reach out to at least three members of your target market within each of your top three social networks. Follow them and join their discussion groups. Be sure to ask them all of the questions I've listed in this chapter. Learning the answers to these

questions will help you to understand what your customers' needs are, and how to satisfy them, which will enable you to effectively promote your products and services.

Chapter 3

Generate Sales Leads

While many companies are struggling to generate qualified leads, the majority understands how to achieve this through social selling, by encouraging buyers to share their contact information and start a relationship with sales reps. Capturing e-mail addresses from prospects helps to fill your sales funnel. Link back to your opt-in page by offering and delivering something of value in exchange for their contact details.

Social Selling Funnel

Most companies believe that social media is clearly benefiting them at different stages of the sales funnel. In his ‘2014 Social Media Marketing Industry Report’,³⁰ Michael A. Stelzner shares the following statistics:

Increased exposure	92%
Generated leads	66%
More business partnerships	58%
Improved sales	50%

Of the companies that devote six hours or more per week to their social media initiatives, 73% have seen an increase in lead

generation. The same percentage (73%) of sales people say that they've outperformed their peers by leveraging social selling tactics.

It takes time to develop social media relationships that foster sales. A large percentage of sales people who take the time to do so claim that they're already seeing significant results.

Of organisations that have been using social media for at least three years, more than half report that it has helped them increase sales.

More than 5 years	77%
4 to 5 years	64%
3 to 4 years	57%

Generate Sales Leads With Social Media

LinkedIn is my favourite social media platform on which to connect with other business professionals. Here are some proven methods for building stronger relationships and generating sales leads with LinkedIn.

Personalise your messages

Most people send generic connection invitations, simply pasting in their e-mail address and clicking the Connect button. If you want to stand out from the competition, personalise your message. Tell the person how you know them (for example, through a mutual connection, association, industry, etc.), why you want to connect with them, and how you might add value.

Follow up with new connections and users who have viewed your profile

What do you do when LinkedIn notifies you that someone has accepted your connection request or viewed your profile? Many people delete those notifications. Big mistake. This is the perfect time to follow up with the user. At that moment, you're at the front of their mind, so make the most of this opportunity. They must have added you for a reason, so now is the time to build upon their interest in you.

Thank them for connecting with you. Follow up with them, and give them something of value, such as links to articles, blogs, reports or tips. In order to save time, you can create a template, save it as a draft and customise it to each contact.

Don't make the mistake of immediately sending out promotional material. That's the quickest way to compromise or even lose the connection. Instead, focus on adding value.

Stay in contact

When a connection gets back to you, that's the time to let them know about upcoming events or products that will help their business. Make contact with LinkedIn users who have viewed or engaged with your content, including those who are not your first-degree connections. Follow up with connections when they announce that they are celebrating a work anniversary or starting a new job.

Identify hot prospects

On LinkedIn, you can create folders and tags to identify and track your hottest prospects. Share your most valuable content with your hottest prospects on a weekly basis.

Connect with influencers and develop brand ambassadors

Find influencers with large audiences on social media and interact with them. Comment on their posts, engage with their audience, and explore opportunities for collaboration. Some of your followers may be highly engaged and sharing your content. Be sure to reach out to them and reward them for talking positively about you by profiling them, inviting them to special events or giving them something of value.

SlideShare

SlideShare is a great social media platform for generating leads. In October 2014, LinkedIn notified me that it was my fifteen-year work anniversary, so I decided to celebrate the milestone by sharing fifteen lessons I had learned during my fifteen years in business. I created a deck called ‘15 Lessons from 15 Years in Business’ and uploaded it to SlideShare.

SlideShare featured it on their homepage. It’s been the most talked-about SlideShare on Facebook and Twitter, and it was selected as a SlideShare Presentation of the Day. To date, it has received over 17,000 views and 780 likes, and has generated about 200 leads.

Here are some of its social sharing stats:

LinkedIn	530
Facebook	232
Twitter	77
Google+	14

Increase virality and lead generation

We achieved this by pairing great visuals with minimal text, telling a story that established our credibility, and sharing valuable lessons that resonate with the audience. We offered each user an e-book in exchange for their e-mail address, which went directly into our Infusionsoft CRM. We also launched a Pay with a Tweet campaign, allowing users to download the deck in exchange for tweeting a message to their connections on social media. We shared it with our audience via our social media platforms. We e-mailed the link, with a striking cover image, to contacts in our database.

In February 2015, we uploaded a deck titled ‘How To Sell Using Social Media’. At the time of writing (March 2015), it has received almost 9,000 views and over 200 likes.

Here are some of its social sharing stats:

LinkedIn	330
Facebook	1,840
Twitter	70
Google+	5

We applied a similar strategy to both decks, with one major difference. For the deck titled ‘How to Sell Using Social Media’, rather than lead generation, our goal was lead conversion. Instead

of offering an e-book in exchange for the user's e-mail address, our call to action was to invite them to preorder this book, 'Social Selling', from the Publishizer website.

How did we do? Of the views of our book's preorder page on Publishizer, 88 were referred by SlideShare. That's about a 1% click-through rate, which is pretty good for online marketing. More importantly, our SlideShare deck helped us to get 88 additional views on our book preorder page at zero advertising cost.

Action

Your task is to think of ways to generate leads using social media. Engage in meaningful conversations to qualify them and send your hottest content to your hottest prospects. Offer them something valuable (such as an e-book, report or video) in exchange for their e-mail address. Once you've captured their contact details, you'll be able to establish direct and consistent communication.

Chapter 4

Get Past Gatekeepers

It's never been easier to get past the gatekeepers than it is now, in the era of social media. A quick Google or social media search can tell you which member of a company is the decision maker. This allows you to bypass the receptionists and assistants—the gatekeepers. How do you achieve that? Before you approach a company or spend any time developing the relationship, the first step is always to qualify the prospect.

Qualifying on social media

Why is it important to qualify prospects? To avoid wasting time and energy following up on leads that may never buy from you, because they don't have a need. This could mean you miss out on making connections that will ultimately lead to long lasting working relationship.

Here are the key areas you should be thinking about when you're qualifying a prospect:

- Do they have a need for your product?
- Do they have a budget for your product?
- Do they have decision making authority?

When researching a potential customer, ask yourself the following questions:

- What industry are they in?
- How big are they?
- How fast are they growing?
- Where are they based?
- Where are their customers based?
- How closely do they match the profile of my ideal customer?
- Which, if any, of my competitors have they previously collaborated with?
- Have I worked with similar companies?
- What were their needs? How did I satisfy them?
- How can I help this particular company?

Gathering all of this information will provide the foundation of what you'll need to include in your first contact with the company.

LinkedIn Advanced Search

The next challenge is to get past the gatekeepers. Here's a startling statistic: When you're cold-calling, you may have to make an average of eight calls to an organisation before you'll get through to the right person. Now, I don't know about you, but that doesn't sound good to me. That's why people hate cold calls, because they're cold. In order to get past the gatekeepers, we need to qualify, which means finding out how the company and its process are structured. The brilliant thing about social media is that you can use search tools to identify the key people with whom you should be trying to start a conversation. Here's where LinkedIn can come in really handy. Say you want to speak with the VP of Sales, the Marketing Director or the CEO of a particular company. Simply go on LinkedIn and

do an advanced search on those titles and that company. Doing so will call up a list of individuals who match this criteria.

The next thing to do is to see whether you are already connected to them on social media. If the two of you are not connected, find out whether you have any connections in common with them. This is huge. We all know that when you are introduced or recommended by someone, that third party introduction brings so much credibility.

Reach out to your mutual connection. There's an excellent feature on LinkedIn called 'Get Introduced'. Click that button, tell them you want to be introduced to this particular person, and explain why. If you have a good relationship with that mutual connection, they'll gladly help you out. At the click of a button, you've connected with that decision maker. No more cold calls, no more buying lists, and no more gatekeepers.

Crafting the perfect e-mail

Now that you have found a company that's ideally suited to your services, and identified the decision maker, the first point of contact is critical.

In the initial message, whether it's through email, LinkedIn, Facebook or another social media platform, use the information you have gathered to tailor a compelling message that speaks to your prospect.

You want them to know that you understand their challenges and have helped companies similar to theirs. Most importantly, address them by name. You want to make the e-mail as personal as possible, so your message doesn't come across as spam. By speaking directly

to the customer's needs and desires, you can make sure your voice is heard above all the other noise.

Always address your message to a named person. It's worth the extra few minutes it will take to search the company website for the name of a contact person, because addressing the person by name makes them more likely to read it. You can spend all the time in the world crafting and tailoring a wonderfully effective first contact message, but it's worthless unless someone actually reads it.

It's also a good idea to try to mention the company's name somewhere in the body of your message. But before you do any of this—even before you draft the e-mail, you need to understand whom you're addressing. The entire pitch should be crafted around this knowledge.

Be courteous, while conveying an air of confidence. Show the person that you know about their company and what they do. Tell them right away that you recognise the challenges they're facing and clearly demonstrate that you have experience in dealing with precisely this kind of challenge (or one that's very similar).

This e-mail is an elevator pitch. You have very little time to make a lasting impression. Rather than listing a million of your attributes, which gives the person a reason to skim your e-mail or close it, make one key point. Tell them how you can add value or what it is about you that makes you perfect for them.

Ask for an appointment. The trick is to set things up so they will have to expend barely any effort. Make it easier for them to accept your offer than to refuse it. Instead of leaving things wide open, propose a window of time or several appointment options to choose

from. If you live in the same city, tell them you can swing by their office if it's convenient for them.

It's important that you keep a record of everyone you've reached out to, in order to make sure you don't contact the same company more than once. If you send one message and don't hear back, don't be discouraged. Try again a week later, checking in to see how they're feeling. You can also try using a different platform. If you approached them first on LinkedIn, follow them on Twitter and give them a shout-out. The point is, don't give up. Just as when you're cold calling, you may have to make eight calls before you reach the right person, social selling requires a certain amount of follow-up and persistence.

Action

Conduct online research on three companies that you've identified as prospects. Screen them for whether they have a need and a budget for your product. When you find one that meets your ideal customer profile, find out which person in the company is the decision maker and how they'd prefer to be contacted.

Position

Chapter 5

Demonstrate Your Expertise

When you're positioning yourself on social media, the first step is to demonstrate your expertise. Nowadays, consumers are being bombarded with messages. There are more choices available now than at any time in history. They're looking for answers, but it's difficult to figure out which solution is going to be right for them.

In order to position yourself as the ideal solution provider, you've got to stand apart from the competition by proving your expertise. The way to achieve this is to establish yourself as an authority, as a thought leader, and as an expert in your industry.

As we mentioned in the introduction, studies have shown that 89% of all purchase decisions begin with an online search. When someone has a problem, they immediately go online to look for a solution. Unless you are visible online and clearly showing that you're the one who can help them, you will lose out to the competition.

Share great content, show great value

How should you demonstrate your expertise? Engage your audience by posting updates that are interesting and relevant. Share with them all the knowledge you have. If you show great value and you

share great content, people will see that you're well informed. When they're ready to make a buying decision, they'll want to talk to you.

Here's a perfect example of what I'm talking about. When we decided to start looking for a new condo, there was one real estate agent who immediately sprang to mind. She's extremely knowledgeable. How did I know that? We're in touch via social media, and she's always sharing great content about what's going on in the property market. Is she the only property agent we could have dealt with? Of course not. Are there hundreds, if not thousands, of property agents who might have performed just as well? Probably. But we chose her, because she had set herself apart from the competition by demonstrating her expertise.

Like many other people, I started out using social media as a broadcasting tool. I tried to demonstrate my expertise by shouting, 'Look at me!' Of course, nobody wants to follow someone who talks only about themselves, so I found it very difficult to build a fan base and a following. I was getting nowhere.

Then I realised that if I wanted to reach people, I should start thinking less about what I wanted to give them, and more about what they would like to receive from me. What were they hoping to learn? Why were they following me in the first place? In order to figure this out, I would have to think like a social media fan. This was easy, because that's absolutely what I am. I follow lots of brands and lots of leaders. I paid attention to the kinds of content they shared. I thought about my reasons for following them. What value were they giving me?

People crave fresh content. They're interested in receiving timely, topical, relevant updates, and they want to hear a well-informed, individual take on industry news and trends. Your followers will

understand from what you're sharing, and how you're engaging with your audience, that you're an expert in your field. Instead of telling people what you do, show them. Let them see you in action. You know what they say: A picture is worth a thousand words.

Once I understood all of these factors, I completely changed my approach. Within each update, I made sure to embed some value, something that would inform and educate my followers. If I posted a photo of myself delivering a keynote to a sales team, I would also share the key message for that session or some videos or helpful tips around social selling.

Engage with everyone

Engagement is key. Social media is not a megaphone, and you are not engaged in a monologue. When you use social media, you have the opportunity to be in conversation with the whole world. If you're doing more talking than listening, you're not making the most of this medium and you're not receiving the full benefit.

If you want to share your message with people, you have to be in touch with them in the first place. Accept every connection request you receive. Why? First of all, you want every person on the planet to know who you are and what you do. Second, being open to possibility is an element of being successful in business and on social media. Don't be picky; you can always screen people further down the line. If you add someone as a contact and they immediately send you spam, you can flag the message and unfriend or block them if you wish. But it's in your best interests to start out by forming that connection and giving it a chance to develop into a business relationship.

Create content

You can demonstrate your expertise through content marketing. That's a big trend right now. Writing and sharing content is an excellent way to prove that you're a thought leader, and LinkedIn is a wonderful platform on which to do this. Now that you can publish full-length articles on LinkedIn, it has transformed from being simply a recruitment platform to being a content curation platform. B2B buyers, in particular, want information. They want to hear your take on a particular subject or trend. Sharing your unique voice and perspective is a great way to demonstrate your expertise and to position yourself as a thought leader in your space. People will buy into your message only if they think of you as an authority. The word *authority* derives from the word *author*, so if you want to be an authority, be an author. Authors write. You have to be generating and sharing content.

Be consistent

Consistency is essential. As a thought leader, it's not enough to make one brilliant post; you have to maintain a presence. Even if it was awesome and everyone went crazy for it, if that was six months ago and you haven't posted anything since, your name is no longer at the front of their minds. In this digital age, with so many voices competing for people's attention, you've got to be consistent to be seen as credible.

There are tools that can help you to maintain that consistency. Hootsuite, for example, allows you to write content in advance and schedule posts around a marketing schedule. I find it really useful, because I'm not sitting there, thinking, *What should I say?* It's hard to find the time and the mindset to write, in between

the million other things you have to do. This way, you can write when the mood hits you and you're feeling inspired. And, because you're preparing the content way in advance, you can be strategic and deliberately structure the content into a long-term marketing initiative.

One key element of gaining credibility on social media is simply being present and available for comment. Sure, you're too busy to be constantly hovering around these platforms, but you can make sure you're around when it counts. I have observed some people who invest the time and energy in doing the whole Hootsuite thing, but who fail to be present on the platform right after the posts are published, when their followers are engaging with the content and asking questions.

Sure, people can tell when you're using Hootsuite. That's perfectly fine, as long as you're on the platform and available to engage with the audience afterwards. But with those people who are just not there to field the questions and comments, it goes back to what I said earlier on. They're just shouting into the megaphone. It's not a conversation. If you want to be taken seriously, you have to maintain consistency by staying in the conversation.

Post a perfect profile

On LinkedIn and other social media sites, it all starts with your profile. We all know how much room we are given on these profiles: next to none. So you've got to make every character count. Rather than simply listing your job title, make this as lively and descriptive as you can.

In my case, I could write: *Tom, Founder and Director of Soho Sales Coaching*. But this doesn't explain what I do or how well I do it. Nor does it tell the reader what they have to gain by letting me perform that service for them. I've failed to include action and benefit, so it's a missed opportunity. It would be far more effective to write: *International thought leader and pioneer of evolving sales processes through social media*. You'll see that I've portrayed myself in action, and I've embedded a benefit statement in there as well.

On your profile, display other ways to connect with you, including your profiles on other social media platforms, the link to your website, and your Twitter handle. If you have a personal Twitter profile and you also work for a company, include the company's Twitter handle in your profile. You may also want to include a few hashtags or keywords, so that people who are searching a particular topic or industry sector will be able to find you. When filling out the fields for your history, background or experience, try to use keywords that are relevant to your market. If you wish to make the most of the possibilities offered by social media, you should approach your profile not as a static, fixed resume, but as a living, breathing organism.

Action

Perform an audit of your existing content. You will have plenty of assets scattered across various platforms. You may have slide decks and PowerPoint decks from sales presentations you've made; articles that were published in magazines or on your blog; and YouTube videos. Pull all of that content together, build a strategy around it, and come up with a monthly plan.

Chapter 6

Differentiate from Competitors

Once you've demonstrated your expertise, you have to differentiate yourself from your competitors. This means setting yourself apart from the competition by communicating your own unique message. What makes you different? What are the essential elements that make you different? As we said in the previous chapter, customers have so many choices available to them, but this actually complicates the buying process and lengthens the sales cycle. By differentiating from your competitors, you're making it easier for customers to come to a decision, which shortens the buying cycle.

Unique selling proposition

At my sales workshops, people always ask me this question: In a sea of people who are all doing and saying pretty much the same thing, how can you stand out?

If you wish to stand out, you must find your unique voice. You need to have some kind of a differentiator that sets you apart from the competition. This is critical, because in the absence of differentiation, you become a commodity. Commodities are valued in terms of price. From that point, it becomes a race to the bottom; it's all about who's got the lowest price. The lowest price wins, because

there's no unique selling position or unique selling proposition, or what we call USP. The keyword is unique.

Say you're working for a small company, and you don't have a marketing department. You don't have these key messages and branding messages. You don't know what is your unique selling proposition. How do you differentiate from other people in your space? Nobody knows the answer to that question better than your customers. So here's what I would encourage you to do. On social media, send private messages to your top three connections, contacts and clients.

Ask them the following questions:

- Out of all the people you could have worked with, why did you choose to work with me?
- What do you find most enjoyable about our working together?
- What was that experience like?
- How was I able to help you?

When you have the answers to these questions, you'll understand why they chose you, and this is the same reason others will choose you. You will have identified your unique selling position. Once you know that, you can use it to shape your branding in a way that clearly sets you apart from the competition. Then you can start communicating with your audience about these messages.

Client testimonials

One of the most effective ways of communicating your unique selling proposition is to ask your existing clients to deliver that message directly to your prospects. Thanks to social media, it is so easy to get client testimonials and recommendations. Say you

exceed your client's expectations, and at the end of the project, the client is delighted. They're gushing and singing your praises.

That's when you should say, 'Thanks. That's great to hear. Can I ask you to put that in writing?' When they say, 'Sure. How would you like it?', you say, 'On LinkedIn.'

By now, you should already be connected on LinkedIn. (If you haven't added all of your clients and prospects on LinkedIn, now is the time to start.) So all you have to do is to click 'Get Recommended'. The client will receive a notification request. They'll type in what they want to say, and the recommendation will be sent directly to your inbox.

It's essential to carefully screen every recommendation you receive. If it's on point and on brand, simply click 'Post to Profile'. It's up, and you're all set. However, if you receive a recommendation and it contains a message that doesn't tell your prospects what they would really want to know about you, request a quick edit. Provide them with suggestions for how to hone it. Because the last thing you want is a testimonial that doesn't exactly fit your brand. For example, if the client emphasises something about the project that isn't integral to what you do, this may confuse or mislead the prospect. You can help your customers to craft their testimonials, in order to ensure that you stay on message. People are busy, so they'll appreciate anything you do to make this easier for them.

With these client testimonials on your LinkedIn profile (there's also a Reviews tab on Facebook Business Pages), you'll stand apart, because you've got credibility. That's the key to social selling; it's what we call social proof. When you talk about how great you are, it comes across as bragging. But when other people talk about how great you are, it's evidence. Remember that.

Be responsive

Another way to stand out from the competition is by being on duty. It's not enough to be on the platforms where your customers are; you have to check in frequently. We live in a 24/7, always-connected world. I'm not suggesting that you have to be awake for twenty-four hours per day, but if you can get back to your customer in real time and immediately start to engage with them, that will also give you a competitive advantage.

A few months ago, I received a call from a prospect. I was just about to go and deliver a session, but I had a few minutes, so I called him right back.

We chatted briefly, and I wrapped up the conversation by saying, 'I can help you and your team. Let's talk more about this later on. In the meantime, why don't you check out this blog post that I wrote on running a great sales meeting?' I sent him the link and went off to my session, having connected with him and given him something to engage with in my absence. In effect, we had already started working together.

Fast-forward a few weeks. There I am, delivering the sales training program for this client's team. His cellphone rings. He excuses himself and goes outside to take the call. A few minutes later, he comes back with a huge grin on his face. He goes, 'Tom, that was another company we had initially approached weeks ago, about possibly running a sales training program. They finally got back to me.'

In sales, speed kills, and social media helps with speed.

Personality, not sales presentation

When you're trying to differentiate from your competitors, it's important to keep in mind that you are one of thousands of people who are doing and saying the same thing. When I was trying to figure out how to stand out on social media, I thought about what makes my voice and my viewpoint unique. Why should people follow me?

At first, I posted these motivational quotes. But why would anyone follow me when I'm just posting motivational quotes? So then I started crafting posts that engaged my audience and revealed my personality. I would say, 'I just delivered a sales training program for this great group of financial planners. Here are the top three takeaways from the day. Have you ever encountered this problem? If so, then what's your take?'

I really believe that there are enough customers out there for everybody. There's enough room for you, but you have to give people a reason to choose you. Why will they include you, among all the other things that they're listening to?

I subscribe to a number of brands and similar industries. I follow a number of news channels, and a number of authors all across the board. Each one of them is putting forward their own voice, viewpoint, personality, and style. What they all have in common is that they have set themselves apart by being themselves.

One of my favourite YouTube personalities is Natalie Tran, the vlogger, actress, writer, and comedian. She stands out because she has her own take on things. She's quirky, witty, and weird. When people come into the social space, they're looking for entertainment

and information. They want something that's timely, relevant, fresh, and fun.

Some people try too hard to differentiate on social media. They're going about it in the wrong way, because they have the wrong idea about what it means to be professional. Being professional does not mean being overly corporate or stuffy. It's about wearing your expertise and authority, rather than wearing a suit and tie. A lot of people who come from a corporate background see social media as if it's an extension of their webpage. If they're doing a YouTube video, they'll put on a tie and they'll stand there and read a speech. They'll say, 'Hello! We're on YouTube.' The biggest myth is that you need to present an image that's very prim and proper. Instead, be personable, approachable, and relatable. Be real.

There are others who go too far in the opposite direction. They're under the impression that they have to be really controversial or behave as if they're in a slapstick comedy. They're pranking each other and falling all over the place. This approach may work for some, but not if they're going out of character. More importantly, it may not be appropriate for the market they're in.

Make sure you know your brand and understand your audience. Monitor yourself. Are you being authentic? Are you being yourself? Are you being original? Can your audience feel that this is you talking? When I meet a client for the first time, they'll say that having watched my videos, they feel like they already know me. As someone in sales, this is one of the best compliments I could receive. The person they saw on the screen is the person they're seeing in front of them. That's what it's all about.

It's about projecting your personality and your character. Don't try to be something or someone you're not. Having said that, you

can look at your competitors' pages and e-mail campaigns to see which elements work, and you can try these on and adapt them to your style. Ask your audience on social media, What do you want to see more of? Think about who you are and how you want to be perceived. Try to translate that into your online presence. And don't be afraid to experiment. Try out different tones and styles, and see what resonates with your audience. You can adjust your tone to suit the style of each platform. I present as very professional on LinkedIn, slightly more casual on Instagram and Facebook. On Twitter, you can be more funny and edgy.

Key character strengths

Before you can start telling other people who you are, you have to answer that question yourself. I'd like to direct you to a very helpful resource, available through the VIA Institute of Character, called the Personality Strengths Test.³¹ It's free of charge, but you will have to register with the site. You'll be asked to answer a series of questions. You'll discover what your key strengths are, and they'll be ranked from one through twelve. These results will reveal a lot about the core of your essence, which will help you to work out what differentiates you from the competition so you can properly differentiate your brand.

Action

Complete the Personality Strengths Test at the following link:
<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>.

Write out your top three strengths. Underneath each one, list as many answers as you can to the following questions: What are the competitive advantages of possessing this strength? How might

this equip me to succeed in my field? How can I use it to benefit my customers? How does it tie in with my brand identity?

Chapter 7

Assess Prospects' Needs

Imagine if you weren't feeling well, and you went to see your doctor. If she took one look at you and immediately wrote out a prescription, this would be a recipe for a malpractice suit. She would ask you a number of questions to try to understand your situation. How long have you been feeling this way? Where does it hurt? Of the remedies you've tried so far, what has helped? What hasn't helped? Was the onset sudden or gradual? She would ask questions about your family history and find out whether you have any allergies. Then she'd say, Okay, based on what I've observed and learned, here is my diagnosis. A good doctor will diagnose you before prescribing treatment.

If you're having a problem with your car, you take it in. The mechanic puts it up on the hoist and works through the inspection checklist before saying, Here's the problem, and here's how we can fix it. In social selling, we need to do exactly the same thing. Before we start promoting, we need to be absolutely clear about what the customer needs. Ask the right questions to uncover their problems, and what are their desired outcomes, and then you can start offering solutions.

Ask your audience

I used to feel that I needed to have all the answers. I knew which message I wanted to deliver, and what I wanted to say. Then I noticed that the people who ask a lot of powerful questions are the ones who receive the best engagement from their fans and followers on social media. These thought leaders are really connecting with their audience and trying to understand what's most important to them. Asking pertinent questions helps them to establish their authority. That's how they became experts in the first place.

So I adopted a new approach. Less telling; more asking. What are you struggling with? What can I help you with? It's important to remember that when twenty people ask you a specific question, there are probably two thousand people behind them who are all asking exactly the same question. That's why this is a really great way to get the temperature of your audience.

These days, there are so many modes of communication. We have Whatsapp, Google+ Hangouts, and Skype, and every social media platform has a built-in instant messaging system. You can easily get in touch with prospects and start asking them questions long before you meet them. Social media provides many wonderful tools for gathering information, so you can qualify effectively and be really clear about the challenges that prospects face.

Ask your audience the following questions:

- What's important to you?
- What do you like?
- What don't you like?
- What are some of your goals and aspirations?
- What do you really want to achieve?
- Which solutions have you applied?

- Of those you've tried, what has worked for you? What hasn't worked?

If you're asking all the right questions on social media, you'll get great answers. Even better, your followers will see that you're asking those questions. When they come up against an obstacle, they'll reach out to you for a solution, because you've shown them that you're interested in learning about your customer base, and you're in touch with their needs. Best of all, you're already in conversation with them.

On social media, I've conducted conversations that translated very naturally into closed deals. Recently, one of my followers reached out to me via Facebook Messenger. He'd been following me ever since seeing my profile on LinkedIn and viewing my content on SlideShare and YouTube, and he often engaged with my posts and questions. He wanted to book me to deliver some presentations to his team. We were able to close the deal, right there on Messenger, after a relatively short dialogue. That's because we had effectively been in conversation since the moment when he first engaged with my online profile. So you can see that social media has completely changed the way that customers reach out to you and the way that you sell. You can use it to assess their needs, and then start selling solutions.

Online polling

If you really want to learn about your audience, talk to them. No one knows your customers better than they know themselves. It's not enough to ask the right questions. You've got to make sure to ask as many people and as diverse a sample as possible. That's why

online polling is a current significant trend around making needs assessments.

Ask your followers to participate in a survey, and give them something of value in return. If you got some great content, such as a white paper, special report, e-book or video course, anything you think they'll appreciate, send it to them as a thank-you gift. They will have received a reward that is of value to them, so they'll be satisfied. Meanwhile, your content is in their hands. The polling process itself further strengthens the relationship, because it lets them know that you're interested in their needs. You know what's happening out there, and your finger is on the pulse.

SurveyMonkey

When you're conducting surveys, I would highly recommend using SurveyMonkey. It's really easy to use, and many of your followers will already be familiar with it, so they know how to use it and that can they trust it. There's a free version, but we have upgraded to the paid subscription model, because it has some additional features, including greater depth analytics, and functions for compiling your data into tables and charts.

Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing is another way to source ideas and feedback from your audience. If you have a project you want to undertake or a concept for a product, you can ask your audience what they think about it.

Ten or fifteen years ago, marketing execs would have had to invest thousands of dollars and countless hours of valuable time into

holding focus groups. They would analyse that data, design a strategy, and apply it. By the time they went to market, people's needs would have completely changed. Consumers would have already moved onto something else.

These days, I can write down any questions I may have, post them on social media, and receive immediate answers, instant results. It's not a question of asking: *What was your temperature last Thursday?* It's: *What is your temperature now?*

Crowdsourcing is wonderful. We crowdsourced quite a bit of this very book you're reading. We crowdsourced the cover, as well as the direction for the content. I asked people, 'What are the biggest challenges you're facing around social selling? If there's one topic I should cover in this book, what is it?'

If you ask your audience what they want, you can be sure you're delivering content they're interested in. Even better, now they are invested in your project and they want it to happen. They will support it, because they helped in the process. They are co-creators and they have a stake in its success.

99 Designs

One extremely useful crowdsourcing tool is 99 Designs. If you're designing a book cover, a logo or a product, and you want to know what your audience likes, you can run it by them and get their opinion. You work with a great designer, who will draft a mock-up. You can show that to your followers, ask them whether they like it, and receive those answers right away. If people like it, you can hire that very creator to execute the design. So now you'll be going to market with a product you know has tested well. Even better,

people have seen it, and they're talking about it. They know about the product and they know about you.

Follow your followers

Another way of taking the pulse is to follow your followers. Find out where they go when they're not talking to you. Ask them, 'What are some of your other favourite people or pages?'

On Facebook, you can easily see which other pages your fans are engaging with, and how exactly they are interacting with that page. You can learn a lot about what works and what's resonating. Check out what those other pages are offering. That will provide useful clues that can help you to assess the needs of that market.

When you connect with someone on LinkedIn, you can immediately go on their profile and see which groups they belong to. So when you know what group they belong to, the next thing you do is to join those groups. Some of these strategies link back to Chapter 2, in which we talked about joining the conversation.

If you include bit.ly links in your posts, you can track traffic. You can see how people are engaging with your content. You can check the analytics of your posts and measure the fan engagement with each post and gauge its reach. How many likes and comments and shares has it received? This will provide a lot of information about what your customers are thinking about, which will help you to work out how to satisfy their needs.

Analysis paralysis

The biggest pitfall of this part of the process is what happens when you've asked so many questions and collected so much data that you don't know what to do with it. This is also known as analysis paralysis. You're not sure how to turn this raw data into a practical strategy, so you sit on it and you don't take immediate action.

Doing nothing is worse than doing things wrongly. Do something. Get it done. I believe it is better to be 80% sure and be fast, than to be 100% sure and be too late. Even if your strategy isn't perfect, you will figure that out soon enough, and you can always make adjustments further down the line. This approach will get you there faster than waiting until you feel like you're perfectly prepared, because that moment will never come. You're ready now. Start posting, ask questions, learn what your audience wants and what their needs are, and then you can take the conversation to another level.

Action

Come up with a checklist of all the information you would need from a prospect in order to prepare a pitch for presentation. Turn this checklist into a series of questions. If you were to connect tomorrow with your ideal target customer, what would you ask them to get really clear about their context, their challenges, and their desired outcomes?

Present

Chapter 8

Deliver Sales Presentations

The primary ambitions of any presentation are to share your solution, list the benefits, and try to offset any possible misgivings the client may have. Covering all the bases in your presentation provides the groundwork that will make it much easier for you to close the sale when you arrive at the next stage.

Back in the day, you would make an appointment with the prospect and gather your collaterals. You'd go to their office with your little flipchart and your printed materials, and you'd make your pitch. I'm not a fan of pitching—I like to go to meetings ready for things to happen and close the deal. The great thing about social media is that you can make the presentation online, and you can use social media to guide your prospects to the presentation. You don't have to ask for a meeting before you can start presenting to a customer, and you can present to numerous customers at the same time.

Online sales presentations

There are a number of ways to make sales presentations online. We have a sales page on our website for the social selling book. We have a bit.ly link that you click to purchase the book. People don't have to talk to us; they can simply click to buy. That's the way the world works now.

We've uploaded a few video presentations to YouTube for our prospects to watch. When they're searching for a solution, even before reaching out to us, they can view the video to get a better idea of what we're all about. Instead of sending us a message and waiting for a response, they can start to engage with our message while that impulse is fresh, which can really help to seal the deal.

One of these presentations is a two-minute showreel of me in action. This is an effective selling tool, as well as a time-saving device. When people contact me, they don't need to ask, What can you do for me? Who have you worked with? What is your proposed approach? They have already seen the visual proof, so they're raring to go. They're saying, When can we get started?

SlideShare, which I've mentioned before, is an excellent platform for making online sales presentations. One of our decks serves as a lead generation tool, as it has an opt-in page. In February, we uploaded a deck on how to sell using social media. It has since gone viral. At the time of writing (two months later), it has received close to ten thousand views. On one of the slides in this deck, we included a link to the sales page for this very book. Almost a hundred people have clicked through to the sales page. How much did it cost us to drive this traffic to our sales page? Nothing but the time it took to create a great-looking deck.

Proof devices

A proof device is anything that lets the prospect see you in action, delivering content and value. These include: YouTube videos, SlideShare decks, tweets, LinkedIn posts and updates, Facebook status updates, and photos or videos of you. It's imperative to get as many proof devices out there as you possibly can. Why? Because

the perception of risk slows down the buying process, and proof devices can minimise or eliminate perceived risk by providing concrete evidence of your experience and expertise.

What I hope will happen to everybody who reads this book is that prospects will be knocking on your virtual door, ready to do business with you. Having checked out your decks on SlideShare, and your corporate video, promo video or speaker showreel on YouTube, they will already be convinced that you are the right choice.

First impressions count

The first thing customers do when they're seeking solutions is to go online and check out your content. Usually, customers are already about 60% through the purchase process before they make contact. What this really means is that they will have formed their first impression of you before you have any interaction with them. If the image you have projected online doesn't impress them, it's unlikely that they'll approach you in order to give you a second chance. That's why it's absolutely imperative that you put your best face forward. I'd like to share a few things I've learned about how to make sure that the content you're putting online, for your prospects to engage with, portrays you in the best possible light.

Creating the perfect deck

On SlideShare, far too many people make the mistake of failing to invest the required time and effort into producing a high-quality deck. I have to admit that I've been guilty of this myself. When I discovered SlideShare, I was so eager to get on board that I just knocked something together and uploaded it. Unfortunately, it

didn't properly showcase our strengths, and it didn't have a clear intention.

There's an art and a science to building the perfect deck. It has to be visually, aesthetically pleasing. The best way to achieve this is to include eye-catching images, striking colours, large fonts, and minimal text. Too many decks that I see on SlideShare or at presentations are essentially Word documents on a PowerPoint slide. People want to have their senses engaged; they want to be entertained. Make sure you're utilising the medium to its full potential, and communicate your individuality.

Form a deliberate strategy around creating the deck. Everything you post on social media is a branding touchpoint. When people engage with your content on any social media platform, whether it's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ or SlideShare, they've got to be able to see right away that it's you. Vary the delivery, tailor it to suit the language and style of each platform, while making sure all of your content is cohesive. Remember to stay true to your brand identity.

Have a goal in mind. When we built our deck titled '15 Lessons from 15 Years in Business', our goals were virality and lead generation. We included a slide that offered the viewer a free download of my first book in exchange for their e-mail address, and two hundred people clicked through. Now they're in our database, and we can market to them whenever we wish.

On SlideShare, we usually disable the function that allows viewers to download the deck. We launched a campaign that allowed people to download the deck if they tweeted about it. Pay with a Tweet is a great way to get your content in people's hands while gaining

exposure and strengthening your relationship with your audience. This deck received 19,000 views in a matter of months.

A video is worth a million words

Video is a wonderful way to make sales presentations. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video must be worth a million. It's easy to become daunted by the prospect of video and either to knock yourself out trying to make a Hollywood movie or to go the other way and drop the ball entirely. The trick is to strike a balance. Keep it simple, while doing your best to meet a certain standard of quality, in terms of the production value.

Audio is critical. It's the most important element. If you're thinking that the built-in mic on your iPhone can record good quality sound, think again. We've recorded some video with the Apple microphone, and it actually sounds very good. We also have a Sennheiser microphone that works perfectly well for recording video. This rule applies, even when you're shooting something on the fly. Plug in a microphone and hold it somewhere out of shot, so that you can capture great audio. Even if the picture isn't of the highest quality, viewers may be willing to overlook that and continue watching the video; however, if the audio is muffled and they can't hear what you're saying, or if there's static, crackling, wind, and background noise, they will switch it off right away.

We shoot in a studio we've set up in our home office. It's not as complicated as it sounds. You'll require a green screen, some lights, a microphone, and a teleprompter. If you read your script directly off the teleprompter, your eyes will look strange and your delivery is bound to suffer. Use the teleprompter only as it was intended—as a back-up. Learn your material, so you can look straight into the

camera. Look at the person you're talking to. Let them see you. Speak to them. Be natural, and show your personality.

When crafting the script for your sales video, start by answering the following questions:

- Who are you and why should they listen to you?
- What's the biggest problem your customers are facing?
- What are their desired outcomes? What are they aspiring to?
- What are the features and benefits of your product?
- How does your price compare with other solutions?
- What guarantee are you offering?
- Who has benefited from your product and what results have they achieved?

Action

I would like you to work on creating some proof devices. As a thought leader, you will already be sitting on plenty of content. It's just a question of repurposing it for social media. You may have brochures, case studies, direct testimonials, articles, and tips. Start organising this content and working out how you can present it. Figure out on which platform it belongs, and then shape and customise the content to suit that particular platform and its users. Think about the types of articles you search for, and condense and customise your content accordingly. Lists are always popular, as are myths, mistakes, and trends. Ten things you need to know about this industry; seven mistakes that people tend to make. You can build a deck, and then present that same content as a video.

Chapter 9

Asking for the Sale

Ultimately, this book is not about how to acquire more friends and followers; it's about how to use social media to sell. Asking for the sale is its focal point. It's time to convert your conversations with prospects to closed deals. The fact that we're broaching this topic so near the end of the book demonstrates the importance of laying the groundwork. If you've handled everything properly during the previous stages, you'll find it much easier to close the sale, because you will not have to resort to pressure tactics. Because you understand your customers and are aware of their needs, you can focus instead on their dominant buying motives, which is more likely to be effective and to leave them feeling happy and content.

As I've mentioned, my learning curve on social media was rather steep. I started out by shouting too loudly, and I received very little engagement. That's because I hadn't invested in the relationship. I hadn't demonstrated my expertise and authority. After taking some courses, reading up on the topic, and following certain websites, I recognised that there is a formula to asking for the sale. Once I understood that formula, I adapted and applied it. Almost right away, things turned around.

I learned the hard way that you mustn't get on social media and immediately start selling. You first have to find the opportunity

to have conversations with your prospects. You conduct thorough research, and use the knowledge you've gained to make it past the gatekeepers and reach the decision-makers. You set yourself apart from the competition by letting people know what you have to offer that's unique. You position yourself as a thought leader by asking powerful questions and writing content. You prove your expertise by making demonstrations and presentations online. Once I had done all of the above, and established that presence online as a thought leader and as an authority, then I could ask for the sale and know that customers were ready to buy.

We raised close to \$10,000 in pre-sales for the book you're reading right now, through our campaign on Publishizer, a crowdfunding platform. We shared the news about the book on various social media platforms and e-mailed everyone in our network. Because I had shared my videos, tips and blog posts about social selling, people knew who I was and that I know what I'm talking about. So when I opened the pre-order page for the book, they were excited, and they were ready to support it.

E-mail marketing

When you're trying to close, you have to ask outright for the sale. It's not enough to tell people that you're doing this or that. You have to say, 'Join me. Click here to be a part of it.' You have to send out e-mails and reminders. We ask for the sale using a combination of social media platforms and by e-mail. That's why it's so important to capture e-mail addresses. As much as I believe in the power of social selling, I believe in taking these conversations away from social media. Connect with the prospect on social media, then engage on a deeper level with them elsewhere.

Statistics show that the conversation rate is about four times higher for e-mail marketing than for social media marketing. There are several reasons for this, but to put it simply: Say you have 5,000 followers on social media and 5,000 people in your database. When you post on LinkedIn or Facebook, not all 5,000 people are going to see that message at that time. They may not be logged in, for one thing, plus Facebook restricts how many people are able to see your content, which is a real source of frustration for a lot of us. So you might have 5,000 followers, but that doesn't mean 5,000 people will see that message. If you have 5,000 subscribers to your e-mail list, you can be pretty sure that most of them will get that e-mail. You can see stats on how many people opened it, how many people clicked certain links, and you can segment that list to see whom you need to follow up with, via another email or a phone call.

That's why e-mail marketing will trump social media marketing every time. But they are not mutually exclusive. It's not a competition; it's a co-operation. You can put them to work together. So what I encourage to you do is to use your social selling skills to connect with people on social media, and then take that conversation off social media and into your customer relationship management system (CRM).

Reading the signs

How do you know when it's time to ask for the sale? Each customer will have their own buying process and you have your own selling style, so you learn through trial and error. You have to experiment in order to find out what works for you.

You have to learn to pick up on buying signals. Say you've just shared some great content on your Facebook page or in a LinkedIn group, and your prospects are engaging with it. Listen to the conversation. Your followers may post something like, *Wow, this is terrific. Are you having a workshop any time soon?* This is a buying signal, loud and clear. You'd be surprised by how many people miss these things. If you're paying attention, you'll start to pick up on it. *That looks like fun, when is your next one?* This is a clue that your audience is ready for you to say, *Hey guys, if you really love that content that I shared last week you might love this workshop we have coming up.*

It's also about how you say it. Always try to come to them with the spirit of generosity. You're trying to give the customer something great. They're looking for a solution, and you have it. Sales is about offering help and support; it's about giving people what they need and what they want. It's only selling when they are not really buying what you're selling. We talked about the importance of asking questions and assessing needs. The reason you do that is to make sure you're not selling anything that they haven't already told you they want.

Social selling myths

There are two big myths about social selling. The first misconception people have is that it's really easy. It *is* easy, if you happen to be a multinational firm like Gucci or Prada. These big brands post something online, and it will receive several million hits in a matter of minutes. It's easy if you're Usher. If Usher announces that he has a new digital download available, people will flock to it.

Taylor Swift or Rhianna will post something on social—I *just ate a hamburger*—and it will instantly get a million views. It's not the

most earth-shattering news, but people go crazy for it, because these individuals have a lot of clout. They are incredibly successful on social media, seemingly without trying. But they're celebrities, and a lot of thought has gone into their packaging and marketing, and that's why they have so much brand equity on these platforms.

If you're holding this book right now, you're not Taylor Swift. And if you are, you can stop reading right now. This book is for the non-Taylor Swifts of the world. It's for the people who have to work to build a social presence online.

So this takes us to the second myth, which is that it's really hard. There are some YouTube celebrities that no one had never heard of before they were on YouTube. On Social Media Marketing Podcast 131, Seth Godin's interviewer suggested that so many people bought Seth Godin's book because he is Seth Godin. When asked whether his model would be repeatable for someone else, Godin replied: "The difference is, I spent fifteen years building a following and trust on my blog, which everyone can also do."³²

You may think it is impossible. You may look at the celebrities and think, *I'll never be able to do that*. Just remember that there are people who have made it, and they started from nothing. Get that first follower. You can do that. Then get one more. Take it one at a time. Don't worry about those big numbers, and don't get overwhelmed or dejected. Just focus on the person who's right in front of you.

I had a meeting with a client last week, and I told him, 'When I'm writing something or posting on social media, I'm thinking of you. I'm literally writing the post for you, in response to a question that you asked me or a solution that you need, that we've talked about, because I know that my audience is made up of individuals like you.'

So just think about that one follower or that one fan, and write your message for them. Keep it real, and keep it personal. People will connect with that, and they'll want to follow you.

It's important to be sensitive to the medium and how it's being used, in order not to alienate your followers. You don't want to come across as a pushy promoter. There are some platforms where people are like, *I'm not here to be sold to; I come here to catch up with my friends*. So you need to pick the right platform. Make sure your audience is there, and that they're open to this topic on this platform. Remember to strike a balance between the social and the selling. The desired ratio is four to one. For every sales message, for every self-promotional tweet, you should share at least four value posts.

Practice makes perfect

A lot of people struggle when it comes to actually asking for the sale. Even a great salesperson, when they think about asking for the sale, might suddenly feel a lump in their throat. It may be a little bit easier online, because you're not face-to-face with the prospect, but it can still be quite daunting.

Practice in front of a mirror. Role-play with a friend, a coach or a colleague. Video yourself, so you can see how you look when you ask for the sale. Does your posture change? Do you fidget or touch your face? Do you break eye contact? Does your face show any tension? Work on eliminating these nervous tics, as they distract from your message.

When you rehearse asking for the sale, pay close attention to the emotions that arise. Do you feel guilty, embarrassed, silly or ashamed? Talk yourself through these negative emotions. Most of

these feelings issue from fear. Fear of being laughed at, fear that you're forcing something on the client that they don't want, fear that you're bothering them in some way, fear of failure.

Tell yourself that while it's true that any of these things could happen, it isn't likely, because you've done the necessary preparation and you understand your customer. What is the worst-case scenario in this situation? You do not get what you ask for. If that happens, you won't have actually lost anything. Missing the opportunity to ask for the sale is the only way you'll really lose out. Now focus on the positive aspects of salesmanship, such as the fact that you're helping the customer, what a great solution you have to offer them, and how much you enjoy your work and your client relationships. Get comfortable. Be yourself. If you focus on the customer instead of on yourself, you'll be addressing their needs, and you'll feel less self-conscious. Be natural, conversational, and friendly. Be direct: 'I know you guys enjoy these videos. Thanks much for your comments on last week's post. Now I want to tell you about an exciting programme we have coming up.'

Form a strategy

Something I would encourage you to do is to be aware of planning your calendar around blockbuster products. This is something we do very well now, though it took a little while to figure it out. I've noticed that many people engaged in social selling don't seem to have a plan. They might push one product this week and another product next week, or a couple products within the week. There's no strategy, no build-up. What customers need is a clear sequence. For us, this month is all about the social selling book, and the workshop we have coming up. So from now until the end of the month, all our content sharing on social media will be around

social selling. The final page of the story will be, Hey, we hope to see you at the workshop at the end of the month. Form a strategy around a key product or event that you want to promote, and make sure everything you're doing across the entire month culminates at a single point.

Action

Practice asking for the sale. Start by rehearsing in front of a mirror and then film yourself. If you encounter any confidence issues or nervous tics, work through it using the instructions I outlined in the chapter. Once you've perfected your delivery, try it out on a friend or a colleague, then start recording your sales videos.

Chapter 10

Get Spin-Off Business

Once you've closed the sale and delivered the product, many people think it's all over. They move to the next project, and they never look back. This is a fatal error. The end of the project is the beginning of the relationship. At this point, it's time to adjust your goal, and to focus on sustainable selling.

If you want to make the most out of the resources you've invested, it's in your best interests to try to keep working with this client. Repeat business saves you time and money. Since you've already proven your worth, you no longer have to convince the customer that you are the right choice; and because you're already familiar with their structure and their needs, you will have to research only the specific challenge at hand, instead of having to learn everything about them. It requires less energy to keep up the momentum than it does to start moving a stationary object, so you'll get more out of the time you've invested. You leverage that, and you build on the relationship that you have with that customer.

The other way to increase your return is to encourage them to recommend you to other people. A third-party recommendation has a lot of value, so you will not have to spend as much time proving your expertise to the new prospect. Also, you can be fairly certain that the prospect is worth qualifying and pursuing, as your current

client will have based their referral upon their knowledge of their contact's needs and on their own experience of working with you.

Social media helps to facilitate all of the above processes by providing a way for you to remain in touch with your clients and to keep the conversation going. If a customer is engaged in frequent interaction with you, when they need to work with someone, they will immediately think of you. Social media makes it easy for them to recommend you, not only to people in their network, but to anyone in the world who is seeking the solution you're offering.

I would like to remind you of the statistics I shared with you in the introduction to this book, which showed us that 64% of sales teams who employ social selling reach their quotas, as compared with only 49% of teams who do not; and the teams who use social selling receive 15% more repeat business. Everybody I speak with tells me they would like to get more repeat and spin-off business. Social selling can help you to achieve this goal.

Staying in touch via LinkedIn

As soon as I'm approached by a prospective customer, I connect with them on LinkedIn. I do this with a view to preserving the relationship. If we are connected on LinkedIn, we can keep up with each other's news, and I will be able to follow up with them after the project is completed.

LinkedIn is connected to the person rather than to the company, so it follows you wherever you go. If I have your company e-mail address and you leave the company; under the usual circumstances, you'd be lost forever. I wouldn't be able to reach you ever again. If I sent you an e-mail, it would bounce back. However, your LinkedIn

account is registered with two e-mail addresses, so at least one of these will be your personal e-mail address. So now, when you move to a new company, I'm not losing a contact—I'm gaining access to another company.

As for the person who has filled your position, I can do an advanced search to find out who they are, and I can see whether we share any connections. I would then message the mutual connection with whom I have the strongest relationship, and ask them to introduce us.

LinkedIn endorsements versus recommendations

On LinkedIn, an endorsement and a recommendation are two very different things. Recommendations are client testimonials. Someone has taken the time to write a summary about the experience of working with you. They may describe the problem they were up against, the solution you offered them, the measurable results, and their feelings about how it all went down.

Endorsements, on the other hand, are skills listed on your profile. Your connections see these automatically generated, proposed skills, and they can click to their hearts' content. It's like a video game, so sometimes people get carried away. They'll endorse you for skills that aren't precisely what you wish to be known for or are not central to what you provide. As a specific skill receives more clicks, it rises higher up on the list. More people will see it and click on it. Before you know it, you've been completely rebranded.

I've been endorsed for things I don't do, by people I don't even know. At the end of the day, how powerful is that going to be?

What many people do not realise is that you can edit or delete the endorsements that don't showcase what you actually do, and you can highlight the ones that you do want people to know about.

If someone goes on your profile and sees that you have a hundred endorsements, and all of them are relevant to your domain expertise, that certainly won't hurt. Ultimately, people pay more attention to the recommendations, so I would like to see you actively seeking out recommendations rather than endorsements.

Testimonials and reviews

Your Facebook business page has a reviews section, where your customers may post reviews of your products and services. Anyone who goes on that page will see the social proof of your skills and expertise. When you've just finished working with someone, you can reach out and say something like, *Hey, do you happen to know anyone else who might be interested in what we're offering?* They can use social media to connect you and introduce you to other people.

When I visit a site, I don't read the promotional copy. The first thing I look at is the comments. I read the reviews, because I want to see what other people are saying about this particular company. That's why you should encourage your followers to write testimonials and share them on your Facebook page.

You may think, *That sounds really great, but nobody's going to write me a testimonial.* Sure, people are super busy right now, and writing you a glowing testimonial is not their top priority. But if a client ever sends you an e-mail and it says something nice, you can say, *That's really great, thank you so much. You know, that probably answers*

some of the questions our potential clients may have about what it's like to work with us. May I use your comments exactly as they are?

If they haven't written anything, you can ask them for a testimonial. You can say, *Well, could I be so bold as to draft up a little something that I think is in line with what you probably are feeling? I would send it to you, and you could adjust it according to your wishes. Would you be okay with that?* I've done that before. A satisfied client will be happy to help you out, but since they have a billion things to do, they'll be grateful for anything you can do to make it easier for them.

Whenever a customer sends you a note of appreciation, whether it's by e-mail or it's a handwritten note, please just ask them whether they would mind putting on a particular social media platform. Provide the link or send the request through LinkedIn, so they don't have to do anything but copy and paste. You have to make it easy for people to help you.

Aftercare

The key to getting repeat and spin-off business is to keep the conversation going. Social media allows you to maintain and nurture the post-project relationship. After you've closed the deal, stay in touch with the client, and check in with them every so often. When you reach out to them, it's a good idea to include questions in your message. This encourages a response, and it allows you to get a quick read on their current situation and needs.

Here are a few of the questions you might wish to ask them:

- What has improved since the programme?
- Is the situation continuing to improve, or has it reached a plateau?

- Have you experienced any backsliding?
- What changes have you noticed in your team?
- What's still missing?
- What do you think we need to work on next?
- How can we support you in the future?

When you're initiating the dialogue, it's a good idea to open by giving the customer something of value right up front. Then you can ask them what, if anything, you can do to help them. For example, three months after doing a sales training program for one of my clients, I followed up with them. I said: *Hi, I hope everything's going well with your team after the workshop. It's fairly common, three months down the road, to be experiencing a hangover or a slump. Perhaps the excitement has worn off, there's been some employee turnover, and the team has reverted to some of its old habits. If that's the case, here are some things that you might want to consider doing with your sales team right away. I hope you find this helpful. Let me know if there's any way I can help you.*

At the end of the day, what you want to do—and this is the key to social selling—is not to see it as one-time transactional selling but to see your fans, followers, and connections as partners in a long-term selling relationship.

Action

If you skipped ahead in Chapter 1 and didn't complete the action, I'd like you to go back and complete it now. You were asked to come up with a list of your top ten customers and connect with them on their social media platform of choice. If you completed that task at the time, I'd like you to check in with them now. Write them a

follow-up message to ask how things are going since the last time you worked together, then ask for referrals and recommendations.

It's my hope that by applying the ten essential strategies in this book, you'll soon be using social selling to generate leads, stand apart from competitors and close more deals faster and easier than ever before.

You're ready to evolve your selling.

Action Plan

10 Tips to Prospect, Position and Present using Social Media

Prospect

Prospecting is one of the most important aspects of social selling (and traditional selling). You need to use social media to ask qualifying questions and keep refining your prospect list to help you avoid wasting time calling on people who are unlikely to do business with you.

Social Selling Tip #1: Find Your Audience

Identify the top three methods for reaching a large number of your target customers. Review the social media platforms identified in this chapter. Determine which three platforms are preferred by your target clientele. Keep track of your time spent on these prospecting activities. Measure, record and analyse your results.

Social Selling Tip #2: Have Conversations with Prospects

Your task is to reach out to at least three members of your target market within each of your top three social networks. Follow them and join their discussion groups. Be sure to ask them all of the questions I've listed in this chapter. Learning the answers to these questions will help you to understand what your customers' needs are, and how to satisfy them, which will enable you to effectively promote your products and services.

Social Selling Tip #3: Generate Sales Leads

Your task is to think of ways to generate leads using social media. Engage in meaningful conversations to qualify them and send your hottest content to your hottest prospects. Offer them something

valuable (such as an e-book, report or video) in exchange for their e-mail address. Once you've captured their contact details, you'll be able to establish direct and consistent communication.

Social Selling Tip #4: Get Past Gatekeepers

Conduct online research on three companies that you've identified as prospects. Screen them for whether they have a need and a budget for your product. When you find one that meets your ideal customer profile, find out which person in the company is the decision maker and how they'd prefer to be contacted.

Position

In a world where buyers are inundated with choices, how can you stand out from other solution providers? It all comes down to positioning. While there's no right or wrong answer, you need to have at least one differentiator to stand out from your competition.

Social Selling Tip #5: Demonstrate Your Expertise

Perform an audit of your existing content. You will have plenty of assets scattered across various platforms. You may have slide decks and PowerPoint decks from sales presentations you've made; articles that were published in magazines or on your blog; and YouTube videos. Pull all of that content together, build a strategy around it, and come up with a monthly plan.

Social Selling Tip #6: Differentiate from Competitors

Complete the Personality Strengths Test at the following link:

<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>

Write out your top three strengths. Underneath each one, list as many answers as you can to the following questions: What are the competitive advantages of possessing this strength? How might

this equip me to succeed in my field? How can I use it to benefit my customers? How does it tie in with my brand identity?

Social Selling Tip #7: Assess Prospects' Needs

Come up with a checklist of all the information you would need from a prospect in order to prepare a pitch for presentation. Turn this checklist into a series of questions. If you were to connect tomorrow with your ideal target customer, what would you ask them to get really clear about their context, their challenges, and their desired outcomes?

Present

Closing the sale is easier if everything is handled properly throughout your presentation. Effective closing methods do not pressure the prospect. Rather, your closing methods need to focus on prospects' dominant buying motives. Especially with increased competition in today's marketplace, you need to adopt a relationship strategy that emphasises the lifetime customer.

Social Selling Tip #8: Deliver Sales Presentations

I would like you to work on creating some proof devices. As a thought leader, you will already be sitting on plenty of content. It's just a question of repurposing it for social media. You may have brochures, case studies, direct testimonials, articles, and tips. Start organising this content and working out how you can present it. Figure out on which platform it belongs, and then shape and customise the content to suit that particular platform and its users. Think about the types of articles you search for, and condense and customise your content accordingly. Lists are always popular, as are myths, mistakes, and trends. Ten things you need to know about this industry; seven mistakes that people tend to make. You can build a deck, and then present that same content as a video.

Social Selling Tip #9: Asking for the Sale

Practice asking for the sale. Start by rehearsing in front of a mirror and then film yourself. If you encounter any confidence issues or nervous tics, work through it using the instructions I outlined in the chapter. Once you've perfected your delivery, try it out on a friend or a colleague, then start recording your sales videos.

Social Selling Tip #10: Get Spin-Off Business

If you skipped ahead in Chapter 1 and didn't complete the action, I'd like you to go back and complete it now. You were asked to come up with a list of your top ten customers and connect with them on their social media platform of choice. If you completed that task at the time, I'd like you to check in with them now. Write them a follow-up message to ask how things are going since the last time you worked together, then ask for referrals and recommendations.

Recommended Reading and Resources

Visit SocialSellingProgram.com

If you've been inspired by Social Selling: 10 Essential Strategies to Prospect, Position and Present using Social Media, why not take your development to the next level? To learn more about Social Selling, please visit www.socialsellingprogram.com.

Each week I share my latest suggestions for evolving your selling using social media. Sign up for our newsletter and read the blog posts at www.socialsellingprogram.com. You'll also instantly get access to (no sign up required) a list of works cited in the book and recommended resources to evolve your selling.

We can also connect on social media:

Twitter [@sohosalescoach](https://twitter.com/sohosalescoach)

LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/soho-sales-coaching>

Google+ <http://google.com/+Sohosalescoaching>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/SohoSalesCoaching>

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/sohosalescoaching>

SlideShare <http://www.slideshare.net/tomabbott1>

Meet Tom Abbott



Tom Abbott is an entrepreneur, sales trainer, motivational speaker, thought leader, and a pioneer of evolving sales processes through social media. A regular contributor to Singapore Business Review and Singapore Marketer, he has been featured in The Singapore Straits Times and interviewed on 938LIVE. He is the author of 'The Soho Solution' and 'Social Selling'.

Abbott's keynote speeches impart cutting-edge best practices gleaned from fifteen years' experience of working with global market leaders in every major industry. An inspiration to sales professionals the world over, he attributes the novelty of his approach to a natural curiosity that drives him to push the limits: in thought, action, and education.

He is passionately committed to evolving the sales process of organizations worldwide.

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About Soho Sales Coaching

Soho Sales Coaching empowers business owners and sales professionals by evolving their sales processes using social selling, enabling them to generate more leads, stand apart from competitors, and close more sales in a shorter time.

If you are the CEO, Managing Director or sales leader of an SME or MNC, and you're seeking to increase sales, you'll want to know about Soho Sales Coaching. We deliver sustainable solutions proven to help teams to reach sales quotas and receive more contract renewals.

Our integrated selling solutions include motivational keynotes, team-role profiling, sales training, sales leadership, train-the-trainer courses, coaching, online courses, and books. We deliver these solutions via the latest IT systems, in perfect alignment with the way you work in today's world.

Based in Singapore, Soho Sales Coaching works with SMEs and MNCs throughout the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of the world.

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