

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



SOCIAL SELLING

TOM ABBOTT

Author of The SOHO Solution

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

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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.²³ 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.