

How to enhance the sales process through social selling

Case: Frosmo

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<p>Digitalization and changes in B2B buyer behavior demand for new approaches for selling. Customers search answers and gather information through online and social media and choose to talk to the seller when they are already quite far in the buying process. Companies together with academics have started emphasizing social selling to meet the expectations of a modern buyer.</p> <p>Social selling can be used in all steps of the selling process from prospecting to closing sales and it should be an essential part of a company's sales assets as it allows sellers to engage with customers and build social capital that would invite customers to interact, engage and build relationships with them.</p> <p>This thesis examines how social selling can help the company called Frosmo to move from more traditional and resource intense selling methods which include mainly cold calling to the more modern way of social selling and how marketing and sales can work together in the social selling to reach the company's sales goals.</p> <p>The methodology chosen for this study is constructive research. The work started with the problem identification that was discovered through the day-to-day work with the sellers by the researcher. After the problem was identified the understanding phase of the topic started with an extensive literature review. Understanding phase included also qualitative study with semi-constructed interviews with sellers. This helped the researcher to start to construct the solution that included designing a training period for sellers about how to use social selling in their daily sales work.</p> <p>Training period was completed with analyzing results and having post-training interviews with the sellers to gather feedback from the training. Lastly, some adjustments were done to the training according to the feedback and new training will be offered to the whole company to learn about the principles of social selling.</p> <p>The findings of the qualitative research gave positive indications that sales process can be enhanced with LinkedIn social selling. The key factors are finding, connecting and networking with prospect customers. Relevant and engaging content is mandatory to be able to build trust and interest with the prospects and thus build fruitful relationships. To work properly it involves good cooperation with sales and marketing and individual prioritization of how the daily sales tasks are being managed.</p>	
Keywords Social selling, social media, modern sales and marketing	

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1 Introduction

Companies are facing major changes due to an increasing digitalization trend and substantial changes in buying behaviors of B2B context. Businesses and academics have started emphasizing social selling to tackle these emerging opportunities and challenges that arise from these trends. (Ancillai, Terho, Cardinali & Pascucci, 2019, 1.)

Itani, Agnihotri & Dingus (2017) explain in their research that the organizations where social selling is widely used sales professionals consider social media as an effective tool to increase connectivity, build relationships and increase sales. Social selling offers sellers insights that allows them to adapt offering and sales pitch according to the buyers' needs. (Itani, Agnihotri & Dingus 2017, 70.)

This thesis examines how social selling concept can help the company called Frosmo to move from more traditional and resource intense selling methods which include mainly cold calling to the more modern way of social selling and how marketing and sales can work together in the social selling to meet the company's sales targets.

As social selling is a wide concept, the study concentrates on social selling methods in LinkedIn as it is also identified as one of the most strategic sales tools at Frosmo.

1.1 Case Company

Frosmo is a Finnish 10-year-old software company operating in the personalization software business. Frosmo's software is called the Frosmo Platform and it enables e-commerce business to implement digitally personalized customer journeys to help the online business to drive revenue. The Frosmo Platform includes features such as AI-powered product recommendations, experimentation tools, and features to personalize the customer journey for each web visitor. (Frosmo 2019.)

The direct sales team consists of six direct sales managers, sales director, sales assistant, solution consultant and partner sales manager. One sales manager is situated in Frosmo's Finnish headquarters, two sales managers are situated at London office, one is in Stockholm, one in Poland and one in Manila.

Marketing is a new organization, having three members in the team. The researcher started there as a CMO in May 2018. Content marketing specialist started in September

2018 and inbound marketing specialist has been in the company for two years but concentrating on copywriting before the new team set up.

The goal of the marketing team is to bring new leads to sales at a steady pace. Marketing has not traditionally been an important function to help the sales to succeed but since the researcher started as a CMO marketing is seen as one of the strategic activities to help Frosmo to grow internationally.

There are some challenges in the traditional sales methods at Frosmo. Sales have been using very traditional outbound methods when connecting with potential customers, cold calling is the most used method. Cold calling is becoming an increasingly challenging method of reaching decision makers. It is even more true with the complex software business that Frosmo represents. According to the Development Technology report (2015, in Pääkkönen 2017, 29), it takes 18 calls on average to get hold of potential customers with phone and around 1 % of the prospects call back (Pääkkönen 2017, 29).

Almost all Frosmo sellers reported during initial mapping interviews that the cold calling is the most resource intensive work they do during their working days. Moreover, when they talk to the potential buyer on the phone, without prior understanding of what Frosmo can offer, sales are challenged to be able to convince the potential buyer for a meeting during a short introduction over the phone.

As one of Frosmo's seller put in the mapping interview was that we sell customer when we want to, and what we want to. This approach does not consider what challenges the buyer has, where they are in the buying cycle and whether they would need Frosmo's help from the beginning. Interestingly this problem of traditional selling is also stated in several pieces of literature. Leboff (2016) writes that when sellers approach prospects, even when they are interested the timing is often not ideal. Keeping the lead engaging and "warm" can take a long time and a considerable amount of effort can add an enormous amount to the cost of sales. (Leboff 2016, 36.)

Marketing has a possibility to help sales to overcome the problem of traditional outbound sales of reaching the prospect and teach them the context of social selling and creating content that is appealing to the target buyers through LinkedIn. Moreover, it is a researcher's desire to change the sales organization's attitude towards social selling more positive and establish best practices of social selling to the whole sales organization.

1.2 Objectives of the research and research questions

The objective of this thesis is to examine how social selling concept can help Frosmo's team to move from more traditional and resource intense selling methods to a more modern way of selling in LinkedIn.

This thesis will also research how social selling can be used as a tool for marketing and sales to work together towards the same sales targets and what kind of results can be gained. Social selling is a method that needs a new skill set and a new way of working. This means thorough training and practicing together is required. As social selling is a wide concept, the study will be focusing on how to use LinkedIn effectively.

The main research question is:

- How to enhance the sales process with social selling in LinkedIn

Sub-Questions that support the main research question are:

- How social selling in LinkedIn is able to help sales to reach their sales targets?
- Is social selling in LinkedIn able to reduce the number of cold calls used in the traditional way of prospecting new potential customers?
- How social selling can be used to help sales and marketing to work better together?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

In the literature review, social selling in B2B context is explained and several concepts and theories linking social selling are introduced. These are including the role of sales in creating a value, the concept of co-creation and a new approach for the modern sales funnel is introduced. Study then explores the process of social selling considering the following notions of social selling; building a personal brand, growing network, and building relationships, engaging through valuable content, listening to the signals, finding the time and setting goals. Finally, the literature review explores the cooperation with sales and marketing.

Next, the thesis presents how the research was conducted, explaining methods and implementation of the project. The last part of the thesis presents the findings of the research conclusions and recommendations for further study.

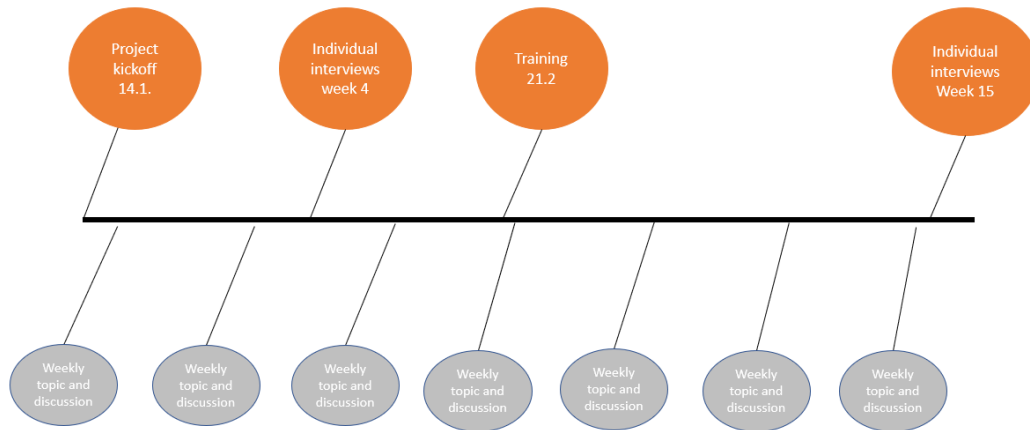


Figure 1. timeline and structure of the research and training

The training period for the Frosmo’s sales team lasted for two months and included the below-listed topics explained more in detail in the later parts of this Thesis. The topics were introduced to the sales little by little during the weekly meetings and one longer training was also conducted 21 February. Table 1 shows the weekly training schedule.

Week	Training topic	Place
Week 2	Understanding of the principles of social selling	Sales weekly meeting
Week 3	Building your personal brand	Sales weekly meeting
Week 4	Listen	Sales weekly meeting
Week 5	Grow your network and start building relationships	Sales weekly meeting
Week 6	Finding the time and setting your goals	Sales weekly meeting
Week 7	How to integrate social selling into the sales and marketing process	Sales weekly meeting
Week 8	Grow your network and start building relationships Introducing the concept of groups and influencers	Separate training
Week 9	Tools available to help in social selling	Sales weekly meeting

Table 1. Weekly social selling training schedule

2 Social selling in B2B

This chapter starts explaining how sales have changed to meet the expectations of a modern buyer and then define the concepts of value creation and co-creation in B2B sales and what role sales have in these concepts. The chapter introduces different elements of what constitutes value for customers and what are the trends driving value creation and co-creation in the sales process. It further draws a bridge between the relationship and trust building activities in value creation and usage of social media. The chapter then explains what the benefits of value creation and co-creation are. The chapter proposes a new interpretation of modern sales funnel where engagement is indicated to be the most valuable step in the sales process. The chapter then familiarize the concept of social media and identifies the opportunities for B2B sales of using social media in their daily sales activities. It further explains the role of social media in value creation and the benefits of social media in the B2B context. Furthermore, the chapter defines social selling from both the academic and commercial point of view.

Finally, the chapter conceptualizes the process of social selling by defining how social selling fits into the overall selling process. It continues to analyze the concepts including in social selling i.e. build your personal brand, grow your network and build relationships, engage through engaging content, listen to the signals of buyers and other stakeholders, finding the time and setting your goals. Lastly, the chapter discusses the importance of cooperation with sales and marketing and what are the steps for better alignment for these groups to work better together.

2.1 The role of sales in creating value in B2B

Digitalization has revolutionized the sales and marketing landscape. The traditional, outbound model where marketing sends messages to the target group assuming what they need and sales trying to approach customers without prior interaction is outdated in the modern world. Sales no longer control the flow of information in the buying process - the customer does. If today's buyers have questions, they search for answers online and only talk to the salesperson when they have gathered enough information and are about to make the decision. (LinkedIn 2018, 1.)

The study of Agnihotri, Kothandaraman, Kashyap & Singh (2012) explain that value is a multidimensional concept that is context specific and that services, resources, and experiences are enclosed in the creation of value. In the same study, Holbrook (1994, in Ag-

nihotri et al. 2012, 336) describes value as an interactive relativistic preference experience. In modern sales paradigm, there are many selling concepts such as solution, consultative and value-based selling and what unites them all is the concept of creating value for the customers. Value is not just embodied in products or services transacted between buyers and sellers, but rather originates in building and maintaining relationships. (Agnihotri et al. 2012, 336; Hogenschwert & Geiger 2015, 8.)

All the above modern selling theories suggest that the role of salespersons is widening from measuring only the sales performance but including other assessments such as customer relationship performance and relationship quality. This shift demands sellers to perform behaviors such as communication, customer service and trust building via nurturing the customer relationship also after the sales. (Agnihotri et al. 2012, 337.)

The study of Hohenschwert & Geiger emphasizes that value creation in the B2B field must be partly understood at the relational, individual level of interaction in a B2B relationship. Thus, through day-to-day interactions with customers, the sellers represent a crucial part of value creation in B2B relationships. They create business value as they are in a prominent position to understand the customer's value drivers, communicate value propositions, and provide customer insights back to the organization. The study further indicates that value-oriented sellers use different tactics to influence the customer's awareness and emotions to change, strengthen or expand customers' value perceptions in the solution, the relationship or the salesperson. Value-oriented sellers can create tension in the sales situations by identifying problems that the customer has not been aware of and disrupting the customer's existing thought framework with new insight. Therefore, to fully grasp relationship value the same study assumes that all salesperson activities can influence the customer's perception of a) the product or solution, b) the relationship with the salesperson and c) the salesperson. All these perceptions ultimately shape the customer's interpretation of the interaction as being valuable. (Hohenschwert & Geiger 2014, 139-140.)

Moreover, recent sales research describes the seller's trust-building efforts as an intangible value offering in a customer-seller business relationship. The research has recognized the following elements being the drivers for seller-customer trust; customer orientation, competency, honesty, dependability, and likability. Agnihotri et al. (2012) suggest that social media tools offer a great platform for sellers to execute trust-building behaviors and activities. (Agnihotri et al. 2012, 340.)

The study by Terho, Eggert, Haas & Ulaga (2015) suggest a positive relationship between value-based selling and salesperson performance. Salespeople who practice value-based

selling focus on proactively crafting and promoting market offerings that have great potential to add value to the customer's bottom line through cost savings and/or performance enhancements. (Terho, Eggert, Haas & Ulaga 2015, 14.)

2.2 Co-creation in modern selling

Terho et al. (2015) explains value-based selling has been defined as “the degree to which the salesperson works with the customer to craft a market offering in such a way that benefits are translated into monetary terms, based on an in-depth understanding of the customer's business model, thereby convincingly demonstrating their contribution to customers' profitability” (Terho et al. 2015, 14). As such, value-based selling is deeply embedded in value co-creation logic and emphasizes the importance of seller–customer interaction for effective co-creation of value (Terho et al. 2015, 14).

Social media has blurred the boundary between the users and producers of value and the roles and impacts of actors in value networks have changed accordingly. The study of Ketonen-Oksi, Jussila & Kärkkäinen (2015) suggest that instead of companies being solely the producers of goods, the service-dominant logic tries to understand the logic of the entire service ecosystem. Based on ecosystem-level actor-to-actor networks, the value is dynamically co-created through close collaboration between networks and different actors in it. (Ketonen-Oksi, Jussila & Kärkkäinen 2015, 1822.)

Co-creation is another phenomenon that will influence how sellers will operate in the future. Modern buyers want to be actively involved in the companies' innovation processes. This will drive the growing importance of knowledge management in sales. Lemmes, Donaldson & Marcos (2014) are predicting in their book of co-creating that knowledge management or know-how will come more important than products during the sales process. Capturing knowledge and disseminating it will be one of the challenges for the sellers in the future. (Lemmes, Donaldson & Marcos 2014, 22.)

Social media offers a platform for co-creation with networking, updating and content contribution by helping companies' development and innovation. Thus, it can be argued that social media will have an even more important role in helping sellers to co-create, partner and manage knowledge within these networks (Ketonen-Oksi et al. 2015, 1822; Lemmes et al. 2014, 22).

2.3 Modern sales funnel

One of the key challenges for modern sellers is to go beyond the immediate sales mode and look at the buyers through continuous engagement that promotes customer retention. Sharma and Sagar (2018) argue that modern sellers must recognize the importance of engaging with informed buyer who has access to considerably more data and choices than ever before. As buyers become more educated and informed, the sales process is less about selling the products but more about creating valuable relationship. Customer expectations are increasing with respect to sellers' knowledge, time of response and depth of communication. The emerging technologies and social media are changing the way buyers make decision providing less opportunity to the sales force to interact with the customer, hence giving less time for customer engagement. (Sharma & Sagar 2018, 301.)

Engaging prospect early and often is now prerequisite of modern business. That means sellers must gain the attention and build the trust of buyers through subject matter expertise and thought leadership in a non-promotional format. By producing digital content which the buyer engages, the seller can influence the purchasing before the customer is willing to contact the seller. (Huges & Reynolds 2016, 15; Leboff 2016, 36.)

Moreover, the concept of value creation and co-creation have an effect of the conventional sales model. Thus, the traditional cone of sales model must be updated with the modern concept of engagement element that is required in value creation and co-creation processes. The wide top of the traditional cone used to reflect the volume of activities of cold calling or sending out hundreds or thousands of emails. The modern sales funnel that Leboff (2016) calls The Digital Sales Funnel works in a completely different way. First, it is no longer the salesperson or marketing department that decides to communicate with the individual, but rather prospects determine to engage with the company representatives. That means that mass volume activities are no longer necessary, therefore the top of the funnel is now smaller. (Leboff 2016, 92-93.)

The middle part is also wider in the Digital Sales Funnel. It means that when a prospect has started to engage the material the marketing or sales are able to provide them, the goal is to keep them engaged by providing them more content to learn from and engage with to build the relationship further until they become a customer. (Leboff 2016, 94).

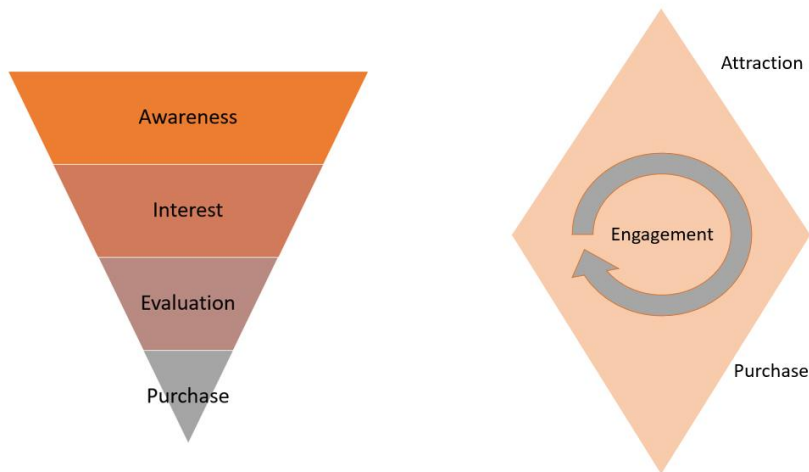


Figure 2. Traditional sales funnel versus new Digital Sales Funnel (Adapted by Leboff 2016, 94)

Research shows that only 3% of buyers are actively seeking to buy. The rest 97% of potential buyers have not accurately identified a problem or formulated any kind of action plan. Thus, it is important for a seller to show the opportunity cost of their status quo and the consequences of the inaction with well thought and engaging insights and content. (Shanks 2016, 93-94.)

2.4 Social media in B2B sales

There are many definitions of social media. Marketo (2010 in Guesalaga 2015, 72) defines it as the production, consumption, and exchange of information through online social interactions and platforms. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, in Guesalaga 2015, 72) define it as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. In the study by Itani et al. (2017) the social media is defined from a customer point of view. Social media is the technological component of the communication, transaction and relationship building functions of a business which leverages the network of customers and prospects to promote co-creation. (Guesalaga 2015, 72; Itani et al. 2017, 64.)

Social media can be used in all steps of the selling process from prospecting to follow-up and it should be an essential part of a company's sales asset as it allows sellers to engage with customers and build social capital that would invite customers to interact, engage and build relationships with them. (Agnihotri et al. 2012, 339.)

From a buyer's perspective, they are using social media to compare products, research the markets and build relationships with the sellers. Moreover, social media makes it easier to participate in discussion groups and social networks lower the barrier to building relationships between people across borders and different cultures. (Itani et al. 2017, 65.)

2.5 The role of social media in the value creation

Sellers who are keen on creating value to their customers and prospects may want to use social media to help them to achieve this goal. Using social media to generate engaging content that interest customers and prospects signal that the seller really cares about the buyer's bottom-line goals. Successful sellers use social media to encourage customers to interact, engage and establish a relationship with them. This will ultimately lead to customer perceived value. (Agnihotri et al. 2012, 341.)

Agnihotri et al. (2012) propose the following;

"The greater the fit between the salesperson's trust-building behaviors and the social media capabilities to pull customers toward salesperson generated content, the greater the customer perceived value" (Agnihotri et al. 2012, 341).

And

"The greater the fit between the salesperson's trust-building behaviors and the social media capabilities to push information through expanding networks of customer connections, the greater the salesperson perceived value" (Agnihotri et al. 2012, 341).

2.6 The benefits of social media in B2B

The study of Itani et al. (2017) explores the findings that sales management as well as the sellers find social media as an effective tool to increase connectivity, build personal and long-term relationships with customers, also globally. Hence social media has great potential to increase sales. The study suggest that social media can play a major role in providing sellers information that allows them to adapt their selling approach to meet the customer needs better. This information can be about markets, customers, competitors and company's own brand through social listening. (Itani et al. 2017, 65-70.)

The research by Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu & Krush (2014) supports the assumption that the effects of social media use by sellers' influence customer satisfaction. This is based on

hypothesis that sellers adequately communicate information that is important to the customer via social media channels. The data supports that customers value social media as a channel to contact sellers and getting timely responses to their questions. (Agnihotri et al. 2014, 175.)

2.7 Social Selling

Ancillai et al. (2019) introduce several definitions for social selling concept in their research. They refer to Agnihotri, Kothandaraman, Kashyap & Singh's (2012 in Ancillai et al. 2019, 1) description of social selling as professional selling approach "predicated on the strength of social media allies within a social enterprise", emphasizing seller's use of social interaction-enhancing platforms for content-creation and networking. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 1.)

Minsky & Quesenberry (2016 in Ancillai et al. 2019, 2) define social selling as the strategy of including social media in the salesperson's toolbox for the purposes of researching, prospecting, networking and building relationships by sharing content and answering questions. Overall, the academic research suggest that B2B social selling represents a distinct subset of the broader digital marketing domain at the level of personal selling. Ancillai et al. (2019) further argue that social selling is better understood as selling approach which focuses on implementing digital marketing principles, including content marketing and social media marketing at the seller level. Moreover, they refer social selling as selling approach which leverages social platforms for a) understanding, b) connecting with, and c) engaging influencers, prospects, and existing customers at relevant buying journey touchpoints for building valuable business relationships. This definition emphasizes that selling and value creation unfold over time and are embedded in broader social systems. Instead of aiming for short-term sales, this approach addresses on influencing relevant actors' engagement and interaction with the seller and other relevant actors in the service system. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 1-2.)

There are similarities in the definitions of the academic research and those that are more from commercial background. Below are two definitions written by authors that are being identified as social selling experts from the commercial field.

Huges & Reynolds (2016) are explaining that social selling is about managing the online community. It means that customers are online discussing brands, products, and services, looking for insights and help to tackle work-related challenges. In the communities, people share information and insights for the common good of that community. It is also a place for discussions and helping others. Companies, as well as an individual seller, must find

and build community. The strength of the community is that it is easier for prospects to approach sellers when they are ready. (Huges & Reynolds 2016, 10, 14-15.)

Shanks (2016) is conceptualizing the social selling in the following three ways.

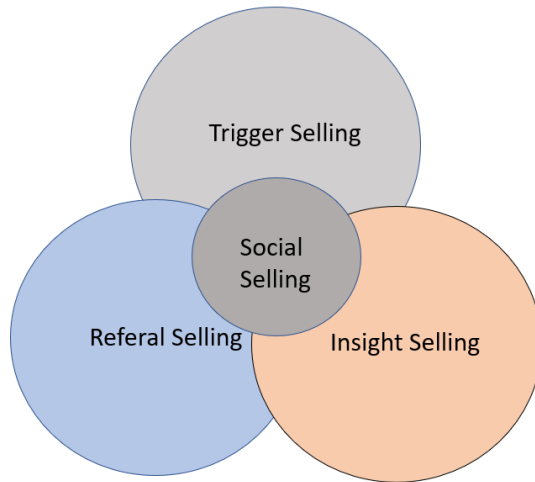


Figure 3. Social selling (adapted from Shanks 2016)

Trigger-based selling is where there are internal or external events happening around the buyer and these events digitally alert the seller real time, allowing highly contextual conversation between a seller and buyer (Shanks 2016, 4).

Insight-based selling is a notion where a buyer chooses the company according to the insights and value its sales professionals can provide digitally. By leveraging digital insights, the buyer can do better-informed decisions about the company and its' products. (Shanks 2016, 4.)

Referral-based selling refers to the fact that buyers rely on other people when seeking referrals from companies and product. Good Social seller builds relationships in social networks to establish deeper connections with potential buyers' products. (Shanks 2016, 4.)

2.8 The process of social selling

A central hypothesis of social selling from both academic and commercial literature refers to being active at the right time matching with the phase of the buyer journey. The goal of social selling is to establish such a relationship in social platforms that they can be moved into real face to face meetings using traditional selling approaches. The goal of the social

selling is always to convert the relationships into sales and hence it is important the process of networking and building relationships are tightly connected to the sales process and CRM which is in use in the company.

Ancillai et al. (2019) explain that while social selling can help sellers to connect to buyers in the early stages of buying, build trust, or be valuable advisors, sellers must reinforce its potentials through concrete customer-oriented selling behaviors. In their research an individual interviewee states “Social selling is about changing the way sellers engage with buyers. Complex B2B sales have always been about relationships and most likely will always be about relationships. Social media is just another avenue to engage with and build those relationships”. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 5-6.)

A big part of social selling is networking with other people and in social selling context that is potential buyers and influencers. Most of the B2B seller uses customer relationships management (CRM) software to keep the work organized. Shanks (2016) suggests that CRM software is a collection of contacts, and social media should be treated as a collection of relationships. The goal should be to merge these worlds together, so they mirror each other. Research by Ancillai et al. (2019) supports this by suggesting that companies can help their sellers to network with customers by integrating traditional customer relationship management systems (CRM) with data from social media, referred to as social CRM. Different research has shown that social CRM has a positive influence on sales performance. (Shanks 2016, 72; Ancillai et al. 2010, 4.)

Social selling needs to fit into the overall selling process. It is a process that include steps of building your personal brand, growing your network and building relationships, engaging through engaging content, listening to the signals of buyers and other stakeholders, finding the time and setting your goals

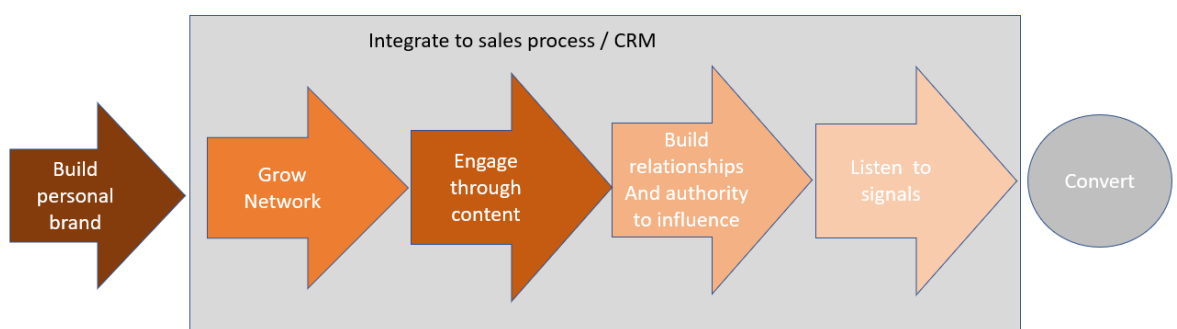


Figure 4. Process of social selling adapted and modified from process offered by LinkedIn

2.9 Building your professional brand

Development of a strong personal brand is one of the key outcomes of social selling. Especially, systematic social selling activities have the potential to build a thought leadership position. Ancillai et al. (2019) refer to Lacoste research (2016 in Ancillai et al. 2019, 8) that has made similar observations showing that sellers use social media to build their professional credibility, which can streamline the path from the first contact request to potential customers. Furthermore, personal brand has an even broader role in supporting customers spontaneously to reach out to the sellers in respect of buying related problems. Interviewee stated in the study by Ancillai et al. (2019) “Social selling is not about connecting for an aggressive sales methodology; it is about building your reputation as a trusted advisor and/or subject matter expert so that in the long run, your customer comes to you”. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 8.)

In addition, Pääkkönen (2017) states in her book about social selling that In B2B, building a professional personal brand is important as modern buyers think persons are more interesting and trustworthy than companies. In average people have 10 times more followers than companies in social media platforms. (Pääkkönen 2017, 87.)

A goal for B2B seller is to achieve the thought leadership status that brings competitive advantage and help to create demand. An Edelman-LinkedIn study (2017) defines a thought leadership as follows; “Free deliverables that individuals produce on a topic that they know a lot about, and they feel others can benefit from having their perspective on” The same study discovered that individuals with thought leadership status increases the respect and admiration of decision-makers and can influence customer purchase behaviors across the entire purchase funnel. 41% of the C-level management invited companies that had people with a strong reputation of thought leaders to the bidding competition without previous involvement with them. Moreover, 81% of the leaders’ state that people with strong thought leadership brands increase the trust towards those companies. (Edelman-LinkedIn 2017.)

Strong professional brand in LinkedIn starts with compelling profile. Huges & Reynolds (2016) talks about the profile being an advert of your brand that gives the first impression of the personal brand to the world. A good profile act as an advert to the potential buyers and should considered having the following:

- A well-developed position
- Well-crafted and customer-centric messaging that appeals to the potential customers.

- A clear call-to-action. What the buyer is requested to do next after looking at the profile (Huges & Reynolds 2016, 29-30.)

2.10 Grow network and build relationships

Social selling leverages the basic premise of social media – the ability to create and maintain a network of personal contacts through digital and social channels. Social selling is connecting with influencers, prospects, and existing customers through networking and dialogue at relevant buyer journey touch points. Sellers’ goal is to build relational networks by establishing professional connections with prospective and existing customers and by fostering systematic dialogue with these connections in social media. An interviewee state in the Ancillai et al. (2019) research “Social selling is first and foremost not selling through social media platforms. It is a way of leveraging social media channels to gather a core audience of clients, industry peers and prospects in order to lay a foundation of trust through thought leadership and mutual common interests”. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 7.)

According to Shanks (2016), building relationships is one of the most strategic actions in social selling. Building relationships in social media are equalling to relationship building off-line. Buyers are seeking people with insights and ability to solve their problems, connections that are educators, not pure sales guys or just order-takers. (Shanks 2016, 87.)

Moreover, networking efforts should go further than just finding the buyers but also understanding who other people are influencing the buyer. Shanks (2016) call this socially surrounding a buyer with influencers. (Shanks 2016, 73.)

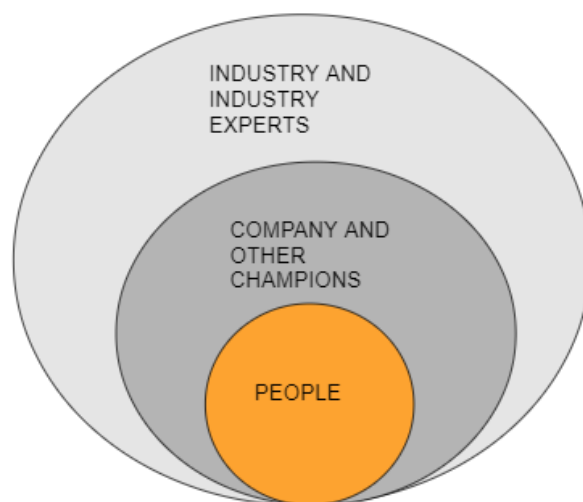


Figure 5. Socially surrounding a buyer (adapted from Shanks, 2016, 73)

It is essential to find out who else in the business unit is taking part in the buying process or has an influence on the buyer. The second tier is to think about other divisions, partners or organizations that have an influence on the buying committee and lastly to think about the industry as a whole, who are the thought leaders and expert in the industry, partner and competitors it would be worthwhile to network with. (Shanks 2016, 73.)

2.11 Engaging through valuable content

Engaging customers and other relevant stakeholders in the network with relevant content is an important aspect of social selling. Engaging content gives the means to influence the stakeholders to interact with the seller. Ancillai et al. (2019) emphasize that social selling is not sales-focused communication with the target audience, but about engaging relevant actors with content that fits their interest, goals and day-to-day challenges beyond the selling task. These efforts can help to establish common ground for future relationship by affecting the relevant stakeholders' engagement. The participants in the Ancillai et al (2019) research pointed out that successful engagement depends on the relevance and value of the content sellers provide. It is important to note that, rather than focusing on the company's products or services, sellers should focus on providing business-problem-focused content to attract the attention of potential buyers. Many participants gave examples of illustrative and reliable content such as whitepapers, references, and even reputable external sources. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 7-8.)

At this stage it is critical that sellers have insights of the buyers, know the buyer personas and know what insights are influencing buyers in the different stages of buyer journeys and what kind of content would resonate best to the buyers. Shanks (2016) recommends that the insights and content would be put into three categories that answer the following questions why do I have a problem? How do I solve that problem? And who do I choose to help solve my problem? These questions help sellers to identify good content and help buyers to identify the needs and challenges they have. (Shanks 2016, 87.)

The goal of the relationship building in LinkedIn is always to establish a common understanding of the problem that the buyer has. The biggest mistake what the seller can do in this stage is to start selling too early in the process. The question that seller must think is how I can help this buyer not what I can sell you. Every content buyer engages need to add value and bring them forward in the sales funnel. The good social seller knows when it is time to request to move the conversation offline. (Dodaro 2018.)

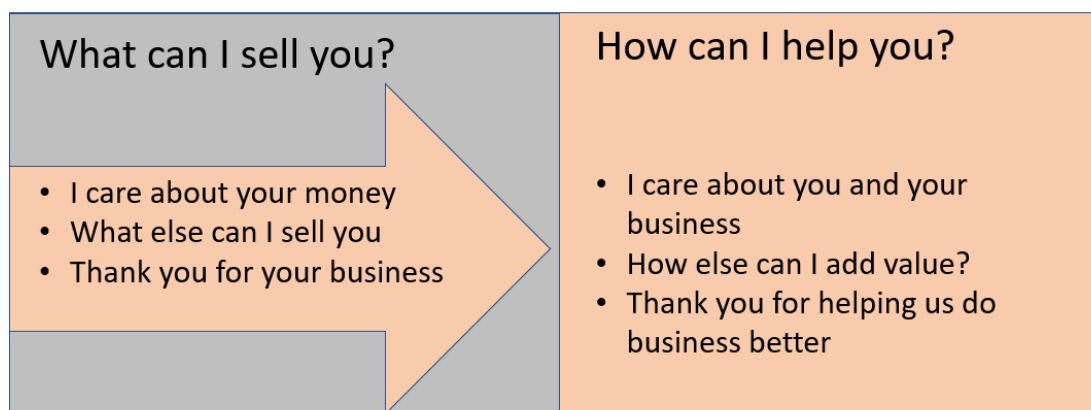


Figure 6. Add value and start building the relationships (Adapted from Dodaro linkedIn webinar, 2018).

2.12 Listening to the signals

Sellers can leverage social media to identify companies and individual's ideal customer profiles, for improved lead qualification and for effectively steering the sales process. This involves evaluating prospect customers' social media profiles and actively listening to customers and prospects. For example, sellers can use social media to gather information about the potential customer's key stakeholders and those that influence the buyer decision, common connections, interests, and experiences. Listening can also be used to build an understanding of the prospects buying process, including the key decision makers and other influential factors within and outside of the customer's organization. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 6.)

A large part of social selling is just listening to the signals of the individual buyers, industry, markets and event competitors. The purpose is to learn what is happening in the markets and in the buyers' working lives and find windows of opportunities to start the engagement. In the earlier chapters, we have established the social selling is helping buyers, not selling for them. Helping requires active listening to the possible signals of challenges and problems sellers come across in their daily work. (Huges & Reynolds 2016, 87-88.)

The typical signals to look for:

- Organizational changes
- Leadership changes
- Market changes (competition, buyouts, etc)
- External i.e. Local community news, legislation or regulatory changes

- New Relationships or partnerships with customers and partners
- Strategic changes
- Tactical changes i.e. new initiatives, reviews
- Events, i.e. Awards, charitable contributions or sponsorships, incidents or accidents (Huges & Reynolds 2016, 88.)

Furthermore, the timing aspect is also important since strategically listening to customers' conversations on social media allows sellers to develop a better understanding of the customers' specific situations and business needs in a non-intrusive way. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 7.)

2.13 Finding time and setting your goals

Ancillai et al. (2019) emphasize that organizational social selling strategy should be integrated into the selling process. A programmatic approach to social selling ensures that individual social selling efforts are integrated into daily sales activities and broader corporate objectives. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 7.)

Social selling is a process as any other selling is and thus is important that sellers create a daily routine and take time for social selling as they would for cold calling or any other sales activity. Shanks (2016) recommends that sellers would take around 60 minutes each day to execute the social selling routine. Moreover, Pääkkönen (2017) emphasizes the importance to remember that social selling is not a short-term project but needs to be part of the overall selling strategy and daily routines in order to work in the long term. (Shanks 2016, 109; Pääkkönen 2017, 133.)

Social selling strategy should also include specific goals and metrics. Ancillai et al. (2019) research found that it is very hard to identify the direct short-term outcomes of social selling activities, so managers should pay attention to long-term organizational goal setting. They strongly suggest that managers should tailor the KPI's and metrics, considering the nature and purpose of social selling activities. To obtain the best results, the study proposes that measures should not simply focus on the quantity but also take the quality of the activities into account. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 7.)

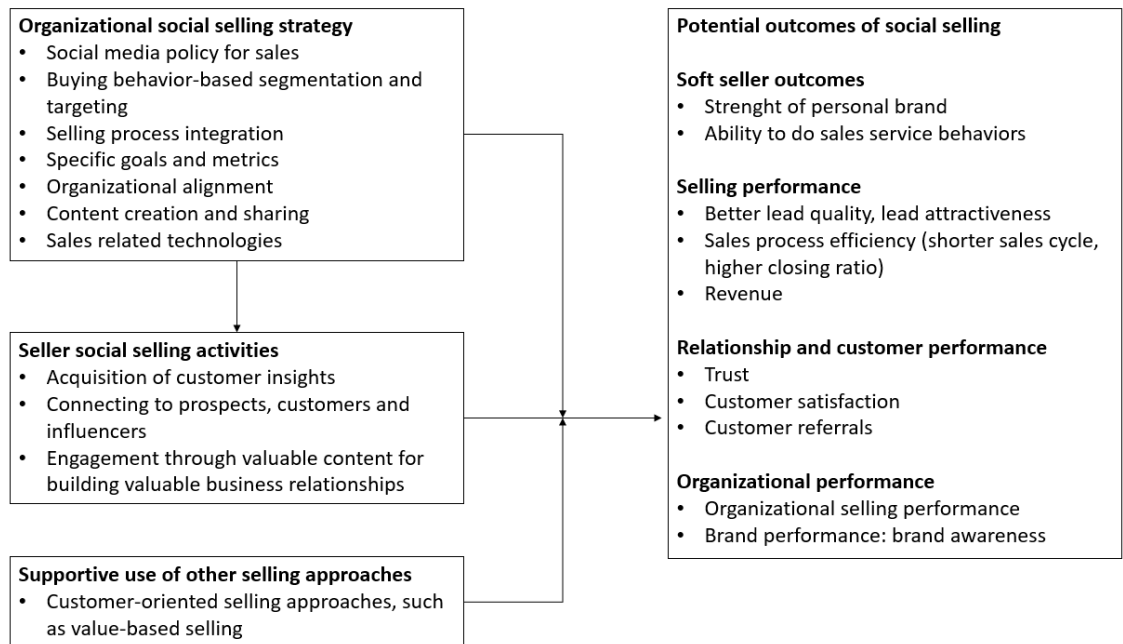


Figure 7. The social selling concept and its potential key outcomes (Adapted from Ancillai et al. 2019, 6)

2.14 Cooperation with sales and marketing

Sales and marketing are customer-facing functions that perform distinctly different activities. Marketing is typically seen responsible for strategy development and sales is responsible for closing the sales. Malshe, Friend, Al-Katib, Al-Habib & Al-Trokistani (2017) argue that given the complementary nature of these customer-facing activities, company's success depends on whether sales personnel are in strategic and operational alignment with their marketing counterparts. They continue that there is a consistent theme in the sales-marketing literature that sales and marketing personnel often find it challenging to work well together. Strategies coming from marketing might receive somewhat lukewarm reception from sales. (Malshe et al. 2017, 145.)

However, organization alignment is a critical element in social selling strategy. Especially sales and marketing should work together for effective management of online and offline conversations with potential customers. Subsequently, Ancillai et al. (2019) argue that social selling should be a more fundamental selling concept with implements digital marketing principles at the individual seller lever. Their research demonstrates that key digital marketing principles such as content marketing, social media marketing are strongly present in selling practices. Many studies conclude that for the best results, management should define social media-related responsibilities for different functions and foster close

collaboration between them, especially between sales and marketing. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 4,10-11.)

By gathering the academic, commercial data as well as own extensive experience of the cooperation between the sales and marketing, the researcher has discovered the 5-step process for better sales and marketing alignment. This process is illustrated in figure 8. The first step with better alignment between marketing and sales is to start understanding the market conditions and the competitions in it.

Sales professionals play a vital role in gathering intelligence in competition and markets. Social media especially provides sales professionals with new approaches and platforms to build up the intelligence on the markets. Sellers have a unique opportunity to learn about the competition through the companies they are working with and listening to what the prospects are saying about what services and software they are already using. On the other hand, marketing has an opportunity to analyze the market i.e. through analysts, partners, and media and bring valuable information about that to the sales process. Social media gives sales professionals the ability to interact and learn about their customers, engage with the customers to learn about their everyday challenges (Itani et al. 2017, 2,7.)

The second step is to define buyer personas that have an important role of giving the face of a customer to the marketing and sales team. Buyer personas are explained as archetypes of real buyers that allow marketers to craft strategies to promote products and services to the people who might buy them (Revella, 2015, xx).

The third step is to build on customer focus by conceptualizing a customer buying journey that aligns customer acquisition efforts of both marketing and sales helping them to see what information buyer needs in different steps of the journey, what challenges they are facing and what kind of feelings they are also going through (Patterson, 2007).

The researcher has experienced that when sales and marketing can agree on the customer focus and what is the customer buying journey, they are ready to collaborate and start creating a good quality content that would benefit potential customers to move forward in the customer buying journey towards the purchase decision.

Marketing helps to create content that is relevant and engaging and sales can customize the content to meet the individual buying personas' needs. This tight cooperation will help sales and marketing to create content that is touching every step of the customers buying

journey. Content marketing is a strategic marketing and business process focusing on creating and distributing valuable and relevant content. The purpose of good quality content is to attract and maintain the defined buyer personas and, ultimately drive better business results. (Champion 2018, xxi.)

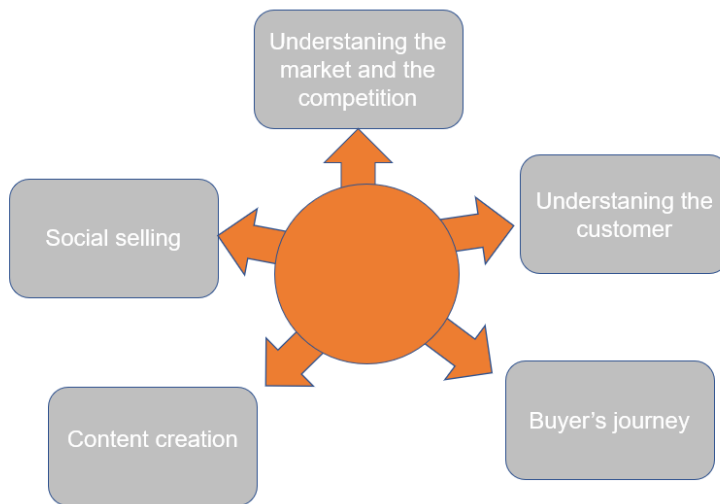


Figure 8. Steps to make the cooperation with sales and marketing work

Social selling is very much teamwork of marketing and sales; understanding the customers pain-points and goals and where they are in the buyers' journey. What content should be created to help customers' decision making and making that visible through social selling methods.

2.15 Summarizing the literature

Social selling is a phenomenon that has its roots in modern sales paradigm that aims at creating value for the buyers. Social media can be used in all steps of the selling process from prospecting to follow-up and it should be an essential part of a company's sales asset as it allows sellers to engage with customers and build social capital that would invite customers to interact, engage and build relationships with them. These trends are shaping the modern sales funnel that cannot be illustrated any longer as cone where the wide top reflects the volume of activities. Modern sales funnel has the middle part wider. It means that when a prospect has started to engage with the content, the goal is to keep them engaged by providing them more content to learn from and engage to build the relationship

further until they become a buying customer. (Agnihotri et al. 2012, 339, 341; Leboff 2016, 92-94.)

The study introduced the essential concepts and steps in social selling in detail i.e. build your personal brand, grow your network and build relationships, engage through engaging content, listen to the signals of buyers and other stakeholders, finding the time and setting your goals. In this the study wanted to highlight that social selling is a process that involves many steps and tight cooperation with the sales and marketing.

The study also wants to emphasize that in order to be successful, social selling needs to be tightly integrated into the overall sales processes and sales targets. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 7).

3 Conducting the research: methodology and data

The methodology chosen for this study is Constructive Research and this chapter explains what it consists of and how the approach was implemented in this study. Constructive research was complemented with qualitative research methods including semi-structured interviews, weekly social theme training and discussions, and one longer training session. These concepts are explained further in the chapter.

3.1 Constructive research

The research by Kasanen, Lukka & Siitonen (1993) defines constructive research approach as the means of problem solving through the construction of models, diagrams, plans, organizations, etc. They continue explaining that constructions are the entities which produce solutions to explicit problems. An important characteristic of constructions is that their usability can be demonstrated through implementation of the solution. Thus, the constructive approach is a research procedure for producing constructions. (Kasanen, Lukka & Siitonen 1993, 243-224.)

Oyegoke (2011) also points out that constructive research is used to define and solve problems, as well as to improve and existing solution or performance, with the overall indication of adding the existing body of knowledge. Constructive research can be characterized as applied studies which often result in new knowledge in the form of standard applications. Mostly the constructive research is used by organizations to solve practical problems. Oyegoke (2011) explains further that constructive research assumes a through understanding of organizational processes and the researcher adopts a role of a “change agent”. This enables the researcher to accomplish the intended changes in practise and support the participants in their learning process. (Oyegoke 2011, 578, 588, 591.)

For a study to be classified as a constructive research it should go through the 6-step process of problem identification, in-depth understanding of the topics, construction of the solution, justification of the construct, highlighting both the theoretical and practical contribution and examining the scope of applicability. Constructive approach encourages of co-creation of knowledge between the practitioner and the researcher. (Oyegoke 2011, 580, 591.) The six phases by Oygeoke (2011) are explained below:

Phase 1: Finding a practical and relevant problem that has a research potential

Finding a problem that has research potential can be driven by an existing challenge in the industry. Practical challenges should be confirmed by the literature research. (Oyegoke 2011, 580.)

Phase 2: Collecting a general, extensive understanding of the topic

After the problem identification, general understanding of the topic is achieved by comprehensive theoretical literature review to acquire knowledge on the types of solutions that are existing already. The purpose of this phase is to develop theoretical construct. (Oyegoke 2011, 583.)

Phase 3: Designing a new construct

Designing a new construct requires in-depth understanding of the literature and practicalities of the challenges (Oyegoke 2011, 583).

Phase 4: Demonstrating that the new construct works

Both the hard and soft models can be used to demonstrate the workability of the new construct as the constructive approach closely links theory and practise together. Soft paradigm emphasises learning, participation and typically demonstrates an interest in underlying social process. A series of methods can be used to validate and improve construction. Oyegoke (2011) gives as an example to pilot the new construct to reach general conclusion.

Phase 5. Showing the theoretical connections and research contribution of the solution

Constructive research approach should take place on established research procedures and operational measure that are documented in detail. This allows interested participants and scholars to validate the reliability of the research. The constructive research demand that the construct should add to the body of knowledge, the theoretical input should be posited; its novelty and scope of application should be clearly stated. (Oyegoke. 2011, 586-587.)

Phase 6. Examine the scope of application of the solution

The constructive approach requires that the study's contribution to the body of cumulative knowledge should be specified and areas for further studies be highlighted (Oyegoke 2011, 587).

Oyegoke (2011) further advices that the people and the organization that will eventually use the construct should be involved both in its design and strategy for practical application. The constructive research approach therefore embedded the principle of co-creation. Furthermore, this will eliminate resistance to change to new ways of working. (Oyegoke 2011, 592.)

Kasanen et al. (1993) also describe that a constructive research is a step by step process and that it brings many advantages such as: a) the possibility to check every step, or every phase of the solution b) The process as a whole serves some definite purpose. Thus, building constructions is a goal-directed activity. The research continues that the possibility of checking the steps of a construction, linked with the criteria of objectivity, criticalness and autonomy allows anybody to try out the construction and obtain results similar to the person who has made the original construction. (Kasanen et al. 1993, 258.)

Constructive Research gave this study a comprehensive structure. The work started with the problem identification that was discovered through the day-to-day work with the sellers by the researcher. After the problem was identified the understanding phase of the topic started with extensive literature review with the recent research and books about social media in B2B context as well as social selling itself. Understanding phase included also qualitative study with semi-constructed interviews with sellers. This helped the researcher to start to construct the solution that included designing a training period for sellers about how to use social selling in their daily sales work. Training period included topics about social selling in the weekly sales meeting and one longer training. Training period was completed with analysing results and having post-training interviews with the sellers to gather feedback from the training. Lastly, some adjustments were done to the training according to the feedback and new training will be offered to the whole company to learn about the principles of social selling. The process is illustrated in the figure 9.

Training period was completed with analysing results and having post-training interviews with the sellers to gather feedback from the training. Lastly, some adjustments were done to the training according to the feedback and new training will be offered to the whole company to learn about the principles of social selling. The process is illustrated in the figure 9.

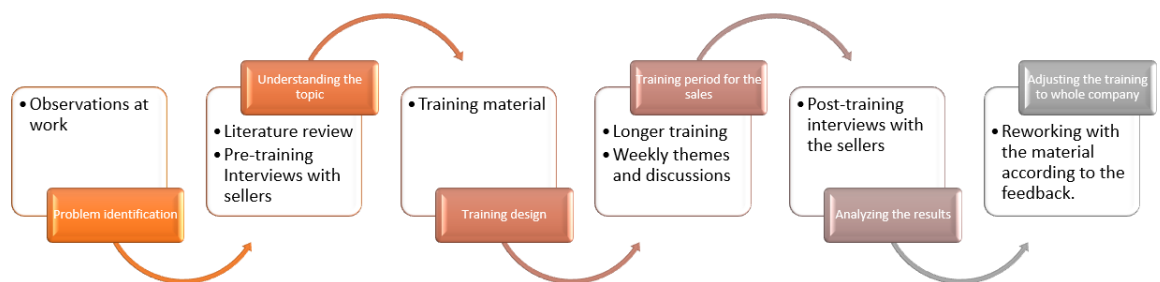


Figure 9. Constructive Research Method adapted to the social selling project at Frosmo

3.2 Collecting and analysing data

Data was collected using qualitative methods. The qualitative methods were chosen in order to achieve a more thorough understanding of the challenges Frosmo sellers face in using traditional selling methods and on the hand how they perceive the new phenomenon of social selling and how to start using social selling principles in their daily work. Kananen (2011) suggests that qualitative methods are applicable when a new phenomenon needs to be understood or deeper understanding of the phenomenon needs to be acquired (Kananen 2011, 36, 41).

The qualitative research started and ended with semi-structured interviews. After research of the different qualitative methods, individual, semi-structured interviews were chosen to get a deeper understanding of individual seller's thoughts. An individual interview is a convenient way of collecting data when researcher's desire is to emphasize the individual perspective and give freedom for an interviewee to convey their views of the topic. Interviews are also a helpful way to deepen the knowledge and be informed about the challenges and or concerns participant has on the issue. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 106.)

Saunders, Lewis & Thronhill (2016) recommend the semi-structured interviews when the researcher has key questions to be covered, although their use may vary from interview to interview. The researcher may also omit some questions and the order of questions may also be varied depending on the flow of the conversation. Moreover, additional questions may be required to explore the research question further. (Saunders, Lewis & Thronhill 2016, 391.)

In addition, semi-structured interviews help the researcher understand the reasons for the participants' attitudes and opinions. Semi-structured interviews also provide an opportunity to 'probe' answers, where the researcher wants interviewees to explain, or build on, their responses. Interviewees may use words or ideas in a different way, and the opportunity to probe these meanings will add significance and depth to the obtained data. Semi-structured interviews may also lead the discussion into areas that had not previously considered but which are significant to understand the topic. Furthermore, Interviews give each interviewee an opportunity to hear themselves 'thinking aloud' about things they may not have previously thought about. The result should be that the researcher is able to collect a rich and detailed set of data. (Saunders et al. 2016, 394.)

Questions varied from what of the traditional selling methods the seller is using in their daily activities from finding new prospects to moving prospects further in the sales funnel.

How much these activities take time and how they perceive social selling and what their skill levels are when using LinkedIn as a social selling platform. Additionally, being an active member of the sales and marketing team gave the researcher the possibility to make observations in the challenges sellers face on the daily basis.

In this type of participant observation, the researcher enters the social world of those to be observed and attempts to participate in their activities by becoming a member of their workgroup. Because the researcher becomes a member of the group within which participant observation is conducted, the researcher comes to understand the symbolic world of the participants and their perceptions about their situation. This allows the observer to develop a deep understanding of the meanings of participants' interactions, and how they respond to their work situation and changes to it. (Saunders et al. 2016, 356.)

Initial mapping semi-structured interviews and observation gave the researcher the best knowledge about the challenges from sellers' point of view and helped to construct the training material from the data gathered. Data collection methods are presented in Table 2.

Method	Objective	Participants	Timeframe
Semi-structured interviews	Initial mapping	Direct sales	Week 4
Weekly social selling themes and discussions in the team meetings	Weekly themes, experience sharing and discussions	Direct sales, CEO and marketing	Week 2 – Week 9
Training	Tackling barriers and challenges	Direct sales and CEO	21.2.
Semi-structured interviews	Feedback and suggestions for future topics	Direct sales	Week 15

Table 2. Data Collection methods

3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

The objective for the first round of semi-structured interviews was to do the initial mapping and understanding the topic to be able to design the most suitable training calendar for the weekly meetings.

The structure of the interviews was formulated under the following themes:

- Current methods and challenges finding and qualifying new prospects and moving them in the sales funnel
- Challenges using LinkedIn in the sales process
- Sales and marketing cooperation

The second round of interviews was conducted several weeks after the social selling training was done to get feedback of the training and whether sales had been able to incorporate the principles of social selling into their daily work. One objective was also to see whether sales had received any tangible results from their social selling efforts.

The structure of the second interviews was formulated under the following themes:

- Has social selling training helped sales to use LinkedIn more effectively?
- Has social selling training helped to reduce cold calls and reach sales targets?
- Challenges faced in social selling
- Cooperation between sales and marketing
- Ideas for improvement

All the interviews were around 30 minutes long. Both interview rounds were recorded and then transcribed. The results of both of interview rounds were analyzed by categorizing the different survey topics and examining differences and similarities in the answers and to research the development after the second interview round. The set of questions can be found in Appendix 1 and 2 and the findings are analyzed in Chapter 4.

3.2.2 Training and weekly meetings

As social selling is a vast subject, the researcher divided the subject into seven smaller topic themes to be discussed during the weekly sales meetings. The weekly meetings were chosen to be the main place for the training as researcher wanted to integrate the theme into the normal selling discussion and take the possible stigma out from the new concept of being something extra on top of what they would already do. The themes and the team meeting calendar were introduced in Table 1.

This concept was adopted from the step by step constructive research approach which helped the researcher to get continuous feedback from the sellers and gave the co-creation element to the training. With the feedback, training material was repeatedly enhanced according to the weekly theme discussions.

To support the weekly topics and cooperation with sales and marketing, weekly themes with readymade LinkedIn posts were introduced to the sales team after the first round of interviews. They copied the posts from the list and took turns of posting, liking and commenting on others' posts. The objective was to make as easy as possible for sales to start using LinkedIn and get the first feeling how it works. It also gave a concrete tool to marketing and sales to work together.

One longer (1 hour) training was conducted to tackle the barriers and challenges especially for networking and building relationships as this turn out to be the most challenging topic. The researcher went through the material and the participants (5 salespeople, 1 marketing and CEO) shared their best practices and learnings from the previous weeks.

4 Findings

The findings of the constructive research are highlighted in this chapter. The chapters provide answers to the sub-research questions RQ1: How social selling in LinkedIn can help sales to reach their sales targets? RQ2: Is social selling in LinkedIn able to reduce the number of cold calls used in the traditional way of prospecting new potential customers? and RQ3: How social selling can be used to help sales and marketing to work better together?

The findings have been categorized based on the mapping interview and the final feedback interview of the qualitative research. The findings are then grouped further for the themes that reflect the research questions.

The main research question “How to enhance the sales process with social selling in LinkedIn” is answered in chapter 4.10 Summarizing the findings by linking main findings from the research and theory

4.1 Structured interviews for initial mapping

This chapter provides the findings of the semi-structured interviews conducted in January. The interviews helped the researcher to understand the topic and the challenges the Frosmo sellers have in their daily selling work. The findings of these interviews gave the knowledge for the researcher to start constructing the training as a solution to help the sellers to overcome the challenges. The findings are grouped in the main themes of the interviews.

4.2 Current methods and challenges finding and qualifying new prospects and moving them in the sales funnel

Interviews started with sellers to go through their current methods of finding and qualifying prospects and the challenges they faced. Five sellers were interviewed. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

All the Frosmo sellers have a slightly different kind of approach to finding new prospects. One seller reported that the most successful way of finding new prospects for him are using referral networks to ask for an introduction and recommendations. One seller mentioned that daily digital newsletter about companies, markets and trends are a helpful tool to find new interesting prospect companies. Financial newspapers were mentioned as a

are good way to learn from how different companies are doing. One seller prefers networking events and conferences to get to know companies and the decision makers. Two sellers mentioned regular Google searches. All sellers are using LinkedIn somewhat in their efforts to find new prospects, although it is never used in isolation but always supporting other methods. Mostly LinkedIn has been a method to validate the buyers' positions in the companies and titles before contacting them.

One of the objectives of this research was to find out whether social selling is able to help to reduce the cold calling and the amount of weekly cold calls were asked in the interview. There was quite a significant amount of discrepancy in the answers from a few calls up to 100 calls per week.

The biggest challenge for everybody in the team was how to get hold of the prospects. Cold calling takes many attempts before the call is being answered. The seller who was making 100 calls a week said that he might get hold of one new person per week. The other seller reported that it might take up to three months of attempted cold calls before the call is answered. One seller mentioned that he uses 6 hours a day trying to get hold of people over the phone. Many felt this kind of approach was not the ideal way of using their time and resources when trying to reach to potential customers.

One seller commented that it is really challenging to find and get the attention of potential buyers and getting some commitment to talk to us. Other seller told that with cold calling it is the seller how decides the time and person to be contacted with, and that might be totally wrong timing for the buyer. The risk in these calls is that the relationship building does not start in good terms if the buyer thinks the seller has not been able to determine the buyer's needs and timing better.

It has been established earlier in this Thesis that buyers' behavior has changed, and the outbound model of selling is outdated as sales are not controlling the flow of the information in the buying process. (LinkedIn 2018,1). Selling has become more about creating relationships and Engaging prospect early and often is now prerequisite of modern business. That means sellers must gain the attention and build the trust of buyers through subject matter expertise and thought leadership in a non-promotional format (Sharma et al. 2018, 301; Huges & Reynolds 2016, 15.)

The methods of keeping touch with the potential buyers after the initial prospecting do not differ drastically. But some sellers moved to use LinkedIn a bit more after the initial relationship has been established elsewhere, typically over the phone conversation. Many

are using content provided by marketing to keep the prospect interested by posting Frosmo content on regular basis.

4.3 Challenges in using LinkedIn in the sales process

The main challenges that the sellers are facing when using LinkedIn are grouped and explained below.

Not seeing the value. Learning how to use LinkedIn and its usage has traditionally been the responsibility of the individual sellers. Sellers are left to choose the best sales tools for themselves and no official training or tips and tricks have been offered in the organizational level previously. LinkedIn has also seen as a self-promoting vehicle with a lot of noise with many sellers promoting their personal brand at the expense of offering value to people. The most active LinkedIn users are also seen as more junior professionals and thus many Frosmo sellers perceive that they do not fit into the same culture.

Many stakeholders. There are many stakeholders in companies. They might be quite random and difficult sometimes to get hold of. Rather often there is one person who is not interested in the Frosmo offering or there is an IT decision maker who refers certain business partner to be contacted instead. The selling cycle gets longer every time a new person is introduced in the buying committee.

Noise and spam. As LinkedIn has become more popular the buyers are getting a lot of messages from sellers and it is difficult to be able to convince the customers with a limited number of words why the Frosmo solution is the best one. As one seller put it, how to find the relevant hook to get the person interested? How to offer relevant content without being too pushy for sales? For international customers, this is even a bigger problem as telephone numbers are difficult to get and the only way to approach them is through LinkedIn, but how to get through the noise is challenging.

To keep the prospect warm. When the initial contact has been made, how to keep the prospect warm and interested in the Frosmo offerings to be able to turn the prospect into sales.

How to find my own voice. How to keep the balance of being personal, professional and relevant to the buyer. How to differentiate the company values so that they resonate being relevant? How to build the narrative to be interesting.

Finding time. Finding time is a challenge. Firstly, it takes time to find prospects. When the connections are made, how to monetize those connections and move them forward to the face-to-face meetings. Buyers are not very quick to respond to the LinkedIn messages and it is very time-consuming to keep every stakeholder in the loop. It is also difficult to find time to write quality posts and articles in order to be constantly on top of the buyer's mind.

Relevant content. How to find relevant and interesting content that buyers would find valuable to read, engage and share.

4.4 What role Marketing has in the social selling?

Organization alignment is a critical element in social selling strategy. Especially sales and marketing should work together for the effective management of online conversations with potential customers (Ancillai et al. 2019, 10).

It is not surprising the interview results showed that sales value the cooperation with marketing. At the same time, they all requested tighter cooperation in terms of content creation and finding relevant third-party content to share to build credibility and relevance within their own LinkedIn connections.

Moreover, research says content marketing has emerged as a highly effective strategy to engage the reluctant B2B buyer who refuses to be interrupted by outbound marketing tactics and who is actively searching for guidance and information online before making a complex B2B purchase decision (Murty 2011, 1).

The results of the initial interviews gave the researcher the basis to start constructing the training material and planning the training period to tackle the challenges sellers are facing in the sales process by giving knowledge and tools to use LinkedIn more effectively. To tighten the cooperation with sales and marketing weekly themes were introduced where marketing populated a list of posts with links to content. Each seller would take turns in posting the material in their LinkedIn feed and others would comment and like the posts according to the list. In addition, marketing started daily seeking new third-party content such as industry and technology news for the sellers to publish in their LinkedIn feeds.

4.5 Feedback interviews

This chapter examines the results of the feedback interviews that started several weeks after the training period had ended. The objective of the interviews was to explore whether LinkedIn usage had become a daily routine for the sales for prospecting and moving prospect further in the sales funnel and examine whether it had become a method that has an effect for reducing the cold calls and becoming a useful sales tool. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five sellers and the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

4.6 Has social selling training helped sales to use LinkedIn more effectively

The main findings of the question whether social selling training had helped sales to use LinkedIn more effectively are explained below.

Overcoming the fear. A couple of sellers mentioned that the training has had an effect of overcoming the fear of posting in LinkedIn. *“I pushed out of my comfort zone and just started publishing stuff on a more regular basis than I did before. And that is a good thing because I learned a lot.”*

“So the main thing for me was once we had this weekly continuous process, once I kind of started to write a few things and I kind of overcame the fear of making a statement on LinkedIn which people could say “Ah that’s rubbish, what are you talking about, you don’t know what you’re talking about”, once I got over the fear that I could say something and people would either ignore it or they might like it. But generally, they might say “How interesting” but they wouldn’t really say anything negative. Once that happened, I found it easy to do. And then once I did it a few times, then I had a couple of ideas that I quite enjoyed. And then I was pretty keen to do it each week”

Building a personal brand. *“The training helped me to rearrange my profile. I’ve changed my description, I’ve changed what is inside and I see a huge, rapid growth of interest in my profile on LinkedIn. I had like, I don’t know, 80 mostly visits on my profile before the training and right now I’ve got like 400.”*

Connecting and networking. Training has had an effect of connecting and networking and now every seller does that as in their daily routine.

"I use it to an extent for reaching out to people. I started to read a lot of industry news and industry pieces so I'm aware of things that are going on. And then I'll send direct messages to my prospects that might be interested, it's quite time-consuming but it seems to have the highest return rate, so people are much more open to connecting. Then I'll wait for a week and send them a relevant case study that they may find interesting and get better engagement. I would say it's more of a case of direct approaches rather than hosting and commenting on stuff."

"I have started this approach that I send an email first to the prospects and then I follow up immediately by adding them on LinkedIn with some sort of message like "I sent you over an email, I think we have something in common and it would be great to connect" and then if or when they accept my LinkedIn connection then I'll write a follow-up message, "Thanks for connecting, I sent over something earlier, let me know if it's interesting" or something like that. That's my kind of three-step process so I'm going to do it to everybody"

4.7 Has social selling training helped to reduce cold calls and reach sales targets

The main finding of the research question has social selling training helped to reduce cold calls and reach sales targets is that the training has not had the desired effect during the research period. None of the sellers reported that the training and daily usage of LinkedIn was contributing to the sales targets. More subtle improvements can be seen in terms of getting more connections and interest which has had an effect of cold calls not being cold any longer as there has been some interaction between seller and buyer prior the call.

"It's too early to see whether social selling has an effect for reaching my sales targets. I'm not using mostly the cold calls, as I'm using mostly the LinkedIn navigator. I had feedback from my prospects, and they preferred to be contacted through LinkedIn because they can answer when they have time and possibility."

"Perhaps it's easier to get a new contact on LinkedIn because of my recent postings. So, by posting on LinkedIn you get more personal, they get to know you more than your résumé. I think it's positive, it's just a matter of time to be able to see the effects for sales"

"I'm making lots of connections and very active in making relevant connections. But in terms of me getting more leads, it hasn't, you know, given me any more leads"

“I think all of my prospects are coming from social selling. Anything I’m getting is coming from LinkedIn and then communicating through meetings, so I guess, up to a certain state in the funnel that’s that happening. But in terms of cultivating somebody through a sales process and having a successful output is a difficult one to say yet”

” It’s made things much more relevant. It’s a great way to serve somebody relevant content that adds value to them in a way that’s not too salesy. So, I think it’s a very nice approach as it opens to them agreeing to be able to have a call or contact with them. Or being able to call them off the back it’s therefore not cold then.”

4.8 Challenges seen in social selling

This chapter highlights the challenges sellers still face in the social selling method. The challenges have diminished into three main areas; personal brand, how to be seen relevant and how to find time to write relevant posts.

Personal brand. Building a personal brand was still something that sellers felt a bit uncomfortable and wanted more help in adjusting the personal profile to be more interesting and relevant for their target buyers.

Being relevant. *“How I can position things in a smart way that actually gets people engaging with the posts”*

Finding time. *“When I am on the phone and contacting people it’s like you get a direct response for your time so sometimes it’s like the time cost of doing, sitting there and writing an article. And it’s going pay off in the long run, it’s just getting your head into space why you’re doing that because you feel the pressure sometimes”*

4.9 Cooperation between sales and marketing and ideas for improvement

This chapter explores how the cooperation between marketing and sales have evolved during the training period and what are the ideas for improvement. Sellers are appreciating the work marketing has been able to do in terms of helping in social selling and producing relevant content.

“Yeah, so I think it’s been very good. At least I’ve gotten a response on everything that’s been posted. So, I think it’s been good for our brand-building. We’ve been definitely much more visible now that we’ve been in the past.”

“So, it’s great now having good content and being able to put it in LinkedIn contacts in a way where they can research it and be open to speaking to us”

However, there are two main themes that the sellers would like to do even better, how to make posts more relevant and engaging and how to be more efficient in social selling.

“I need some content and some ideas for openings in posts. Maybe some unique selling points that I could share”

“How to do it more efficiently, how to make posts more often and better?”

For the future improvement, it was agreed with some of the sellers that marketing would help them to start writing longer articles in LinkedIn. The objective of the articles would be to show sellers’ expertise and thought leadership and thus help the brand building activities as well as getting higher engagement from the audience by posting content that is more personal and relevant to the connections they have.

4.10 Summarising findings

The study gives answers to the main research question “How to enhance the sales process with social selling in LinkedIn?” To understand this problem better, there were three sub-questions to be answered 1) How social selling in LinkedIn is able to help sales to reach their sales targets? 2) Is social selling in LinkedIn able to reduce the number of cold calls used in the traditional way of prospecting new potential customers? 3) How social selling can be used to help sales and marketing to work better together?

In the response to the main research question of how to enhance the sales process with social selling in LinkedIn, the findings of the qualitative research gave positive indications that sales process can be enhanced with LinkedIn social selling. The key factors are finding, connecting and networking with prospect customers. Relevant and engaging content is mandatory to be able to build trust and interest with the prospects and thus build fruitful relationships. To work properly it involves good cooperation with sales and marketing and individual prioritization of how the daily sales task are being managed.

In response to sub-question 1, How social selling in LinkedIn is able to help sales to reach their sales targets, the sales teams are not there yet. There are some indications that sales funnels are being built with using social selling but reaching the sales target requires

more time to change the behavior. Moreover, relating findings to the sub-question 2, Is social selling in LinkedIn able to reduce the number of cold calls used in the traditional way of prospecting new potential customers, the answer is that the number of cold calls was not getting lower with the social selling. However, there some shift in behavior to be seen towards making the first contacts through LinkedIn before contacting via phone. Which according to some of the interview findings were helping the process of cold calls as well.

In terms of the third sub-question of How social selling can be used to help sales and marketing to work better together, there is a clear connection that cooperation is needed in order to be successful in social selling. Social selling gives a great organizational alignment for sales and marketing to integrate the disciplines to a common framework, share the same goals and help each other to understand the customers better. In this study, sales appreciated the efforts marketing puts into content creation that helps sellers to post relevant information in LinkedIn.

The process and the outcomes of obtaining initial information about the topic, the interviews, daily observations, and weekly themes and discussions built a good foundation to apply LinkedIn social selling skills in Frosmo sales team and to develop the approach further. The feedback has given the researcher thorough knowledge to further design the social selling training material for the benefit of whole Frosmo employees.

5 Conclusions

It has been established in this study that organizations must start changing their selling methods due to an increasing digitalization trend and substantial changes in buying behaviors. Modern companies and salespeople must recognize the importance of dealing with an informed customer who has access to considerably more information and choices. Thus, the emphasis of the seller is to build relationships and the need to start influencing the potential buyer early in the buyer journey to build trust and rapport. (Ancillai et al. 2019, 1; Sharma et al. 2018, 301.)

The essence of building the relationships B2B sellers need to bring value to the potential customer. Sellers create business value as they are in a prominent position to understand the customer's value drivers, communicate value propositions, and provide customer insights back to the organization. Value is not just embodied in products or services transacted between buyers and sellers, but rather originates in building and maintaining relationships. (Hohenschwert et al. 2014, 139; Hogenschwert, et al. 2015, 8.)

Social selling gives both marketing and sales the method to influence the buyer at any point of their journey (LinkedIn 2018, 4). Hence makes it critical for sales and marketing to cooperate closely together to make social selling work and bring results to the company.

Marketing helps to create content that is relevant and engaging and sales can customize the content to meet the individual buying personas' needs. This tight cooperation will help sales and marketing to create content that is touching every step of the customers buying journey. Content marketing is a strategic marketing and business process focusing on creating and distributing valuable and relevant content. The purpose of good quality content is to attract and maintain the defined buyer personas and, ultimately drive better business results. (Champion 2018, xxi.)

The study introduced modern digital sales funnel by Leboff (2016) where the middle of the funnel is the widest. It means that when a prospect has started to engage the material the marketing or sales are able to provide them, the goal is to keep them engaged by providing them more content to learn from and engage to build the relationship further until they become a buying customer. (Leboff 2016, 94.)

Organizations, where social selling is widely used, sales professionals consider social media as an effective tool to increase connectivity, build relationships and increase sales. Social selling offers sales professionals information that allows them to adapt offering and

sales pitch to according to the buyers' needs. It has also been established that successful sellers use social media to encourage customers to interact, engage and establish a relationship with them. This will ultimately lead to customer perceived value. (Itani et al. 2017, 70; Agnihotri et al. 2012, 341).

Mirroring learnings from the literature review and observing closely the Fromo sales team it has become apparent that we are on the right track introducing social selling initiative to the sales team. The objective was to enhance the sales process with social selling in LinkedIn and ultimately bring sales. The training period lasted two months introducing a new way of working with LinkedIn, including building a personal brand, listening to signals, growing your network and build relationships, finding the time and setting your goals, integrating social selling into the sales and marketing process.

The results are promising, many have built confidence in posting, commenting and sharing content and starting to learn what kind of content is the most interesting among their buyer personas. Many are using LinkedIn when they are first contacting a prospect which makes the cold calling easier. As marketing and sales are now working on the same goal, social selling to be successful, the cooperation has become closer and more fruitful.

Social selling is a new way of working and thus will take more time to get the full effects. Based on the learning of Frosmo sales, it is now easier to develop social selling training for the rest of the company during June.

5.1 Reliability & Validity

The verification of reliability, validity, and quality is extremely important in scientific research. Kananen (2011) explains that in the qualitative research the reliability might become a challenge as the object of the research is an individual or a group of individuals. He explains further that humans do not always act in a systematic or rational way and randomness is a rule rather than an exception. Reliability refers to the consistency and reparability of the measurement and research results meaning that if the research is repeated the results would be the same. Validity refers to whether the thesis answers the questions it is intended to answer, i.e. have the thesis researched the right things. (Kananen 2011, 66.)

Saunders (2016) emphasizes that reliability issues are often associated with the semi-structured interviews as done in this research. The issues concerned are; Reliability/dependability; forms of bias; cultural differences; generalisability/transferability; validity/credibility. (Saunders et al. 2016, 396.)

The researcher has considered the reliability and validity issues in all phases of this research. Reliability is achieved through being consistent in explaining the different steps as transparently as possible. The interview questions were the same to all the participants and all the interviews were recorded and the presentation material kept from the weekly meetings and the training.

The participants in this study were different nationalities; Finnish, Polish, Norwegian, Swedish and British. This fact might have given room for bias coming from cultural differences while interpreting the interview questions and answers. In addition, some of the interviews were done over online video connection and might have caused some bias towards results as not all the persons were met in the same kind of settings. Moreover, it also a challenge for the researcher not to generalize the interview answers to a large group of people. Therefore, extra care has been taken when recording analysing the individual answers.

5.2 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future

This study researched one organization and the findings are related to Frosmo and as such not directly applicable to other organizations. However, this thesis can provide guidance to other companies that wish to start embracing social selling with their employees.

The study was limited to only a small amount of salespeople, five from the sales team and therefore the results could have been more diverse if there were more people involved. Moreover, the research period was relatively short for this kind of study were a change of behavior is needed to fully utilize the power of social selling. If the research period would have been longer there could have been a different kind of findings in the study.

As stated above, it takes time to change the behavior and it is recommended that this kind of project would last at least for 6 months to get more tangible results. It is also recommended that the researcher would get acquainted with the change management principles to tackle the possible resistance rising in changing daily working methods.

Sales would also need more training in writing skills and finding their own authentic voice to be able to craft articles by themselves. For the future it is recommended that these individual skills of producing content will be promoted within the sales community.

As social selling has been seen as something that individuals do rather than organizations all the sellers had different baselines to start social selling. It would be recommended to tailor the training more according to the individual needs of the sellers rather than one common one. Social selling is an important topic for the whole company to understand so it is suggested that everybody in the organization would be able to participate in this kind of training in the future.

5.3 Reflection on learning

This study contributed to the researcher's personal learning on many levels. It gave a lot of new insights into the modern way of selling and social selling. It gave a better understanding of how sales are required to change to meet the expectations of the modern buyer and what are the factors that contribute to being a successful seller.

This study helped the researcher to understand the concept of a research project; identifying the challenge and crafting the research questions. The study helped to realize the importance of a thorough research. Academic literature helped to understand the topic more in depth. Moreover, by understanding the academic literature of the topic gave the researcher tools to also critically observe the commercial sources.

Furthermore, this study helped the researcher to understand how to plan and implement a research project, the different research methods, best practices for conducting interviews and how to search and find academic literature. The challenge was to combine the different information together in an academic and compelling way.

The research process gave a lot of insight into how sales are motivated and how cooperation between marketing and sales could be done more effectively. Changing the working culture and the behavior of others is never easy but nonetheless, the researcher learned a lot about change management as there was a lot of doubt among the sellers whether social selling could work. Coaching skills were also needed when there were times that somebody lacked confidence in building a personal brand, posting or networking.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions for mapping interview

1. What are the methods do you use when finding new prospect customers?
2. What are the methods do you use when moving prospects further in the sales funnel?
3. What are your challenges in finding new prospects and moving them further in the sales funnel?
4. How much and what kind of resources it takes to find and qualify prospects?
5. how many cold calls you do per week?
6. Have you utilized LinkedIn in any part of the sales process?
7. How?
8. What is your experience in using LinkedIn in the sales process?
9. What challenges have you come across in using LinkedIn in your sales work?
10. What kind of skills would you need to become better in using LinkedIn in your sales efforts?
11. What are your expectations for the social selling training project?
12. What role do you see marketing has in social selling?

Appendix 2. Interview questions for mapping interview

1. Has social selling training helped you to use LinkedIn in your sales efforts?
2. Is social selling helping you to reach your sales targets?
3. Is social selling helping you to reduce cold calls?
4. Biggest challenges when using LinkedIn in your sales efforts?
 - Do not see the value
 - Difficult to find time
 - Difficult to find new prospects
 - Difficult to write posts that are relevant to my target audience
 - Difficult to reach people through LinkedIn
 - Something else?
5. How do you see the cooperation with the marketing working?
6. Ideas for improvement

Social selling training material

What is social selling

Social Selling

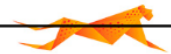
Leveraging your *Professional Brand* to fill your pipeline with the *right People, Insights & Relationships*.

Social selling isn't an opportunity that has come about because social media creates a different way to sell. Social selling is a reaction that has come about because social media creates a different way to BUY!

Engaging prospect early and often in the decision cycle is now a prerequisite of modern business and the battle for attention is fought through subject matter expertise and thought leadership in a non-promotional format!

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2



Why this project

- To get closer cooperation with Marketing and Sales
- To be able to get more quality leads for sales
- Move forward the prospects in the sales funnel
- To be able to learn about the customer behaviour in the social media
- Increase awareness, reputation, thought leadership and online connections

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3

Primary Benefits of Using Social Selling Tools According to B2B Professionals Worldwide, July 2016 % of respondents



Source: CSO Insights and Seismic, "2016 Sales Enablement Optimization Study," July 28, 2016
213857 www.Marketer.com



Project Social selling

- Project lasts 2 months
- Goal to get marketing and sales to work more closely together
- Help sales to get new prospects and move the old ones for agreement stage
- The project starts and ends with the interview of each of the sales person
 - Where helps is needed
 - What are the expectations of the project
 - How project has helped the sales?
- Going through new aspects/ lessons learnt/ tips and trick in the Monday sales meeting. 1to1s and longer workshops arranged if necessary.
- Final questionnaire for the project to get feedback

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4



The process of social seller - Agenda

1. Understanding of the principles of social selling
2. Building your personal brand
3. Listen
4. Grow your network and start building relationships
5. Finding time and Setting your goals
6. How to integrate social selling into the sales and marketing process
7. Tools available to help in social selling

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5



1. Understanding of the principles of social selling

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The challenges of traditional selling methods

- Cold calling takes too much time and effort - industry average is to call 18 times in order to get hold of the buyer.
- Most of the sales effort is outbound. Struggle of having inbound leads.
- We sell when WE want to WHO we want to WHAT we want to -> Lack of insights
- From customers point of view, they are constantly interrupted by sales people trying to sell something
- Buyers are using more and more social networks to get new ideas, seek for latest information and seek for solutions to their challenges.
- The likelihood your LinkedIn inmail will read is approx 7% . 93% rejection rate. So, what can we do to get to rejection rates of 10%?

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7



Buying has changed

- 60 - 90% of buyers use social media to research before making a purchase
- Average amount of cold call is around 18 before the contact is reached. Only around 1% of contacts are calling back
- Your social media presence is your introduction to these buyers. 81 % are more likely to engage with strong, professional brand.
- 70% B2B buyers trust more recommendations that come from another person rather than from the company
- An average B2B opportunity has 5,4 decision makers involved
 - Social selling enables you to leverage extended networks to find those multiple contact points.
 - Many that are influencing the decisions are Millennials

Traditional sales and marketing methods are becoming less and less effective.

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Social seller is...

..... a supplier of timely information, which in itself delivers value, as opposed to just a supplier of goods and services. By building a community and building up authority around your "domain" of that community social seller is able to create value.

.....is replacing the list building and interruption aspects of the traditional sales process with social networking activities.

....Social seller is a helper. Helping = adding value and teaching! -> make them curious for more.

Would your prospects be happy to have a content ie: 10 things you need to know when buying personalization software!

..... A community manager helping their community to do better.

....Social seller is changing the communication to from one way communication to a dialogue

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Social seller is...

...is always seeking to get on2one contact ➡ objective throughout social selling efforts is to drive people through to a point where they are ready to talk to you in person

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10



Community

- Community is a new competitive advantage
- People share amongst themselves for the common good fo that community.
- Working in social media is about communities not corporate structure
- You only get out from community what you put in and if you are only taking and not giving in at least equal quantity then you wont grow your follower base, your community and you won't get to create leads and revenue. '
- Grow and nurture that community

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11



Advantages for the different stakeholders

Buyers:

- 87% customers had a favorable impression of a salesperson who was introduced to them through their network.
- 70% of customers want problems solved, not to be sold to.

Sales professionals:

- Leveraging networks for introductions eliminates cold calls
- Insights gained from social conversation help to personalize pitches
- Prior sales drive 70% future leads

Marketing professionals

- 65% of buyers agree that a vendor's content has significant impact on buying decision.
- Better lead generation and qualification for a more-equipped sales team
- More relevant content directed at specific stakeholders
- Your brand is viewed as a problem-solving resource, a magnet for customers.

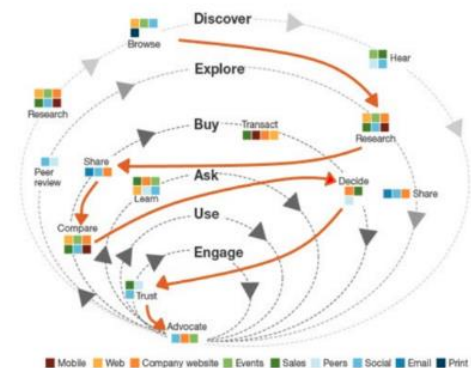
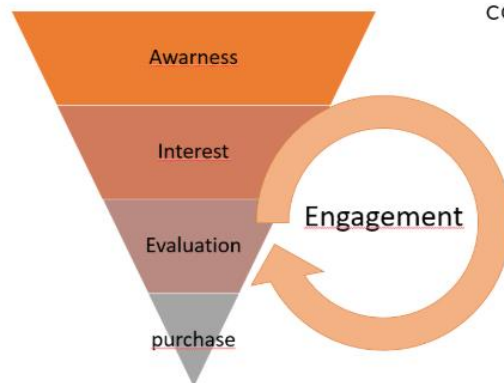
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12



From one way communication to a dialogue

Sales funnel has changed from one way communication to a engagement.



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13



Cooperation with sales and marketing

Social selling isn't just for the sales team. For the model to work most effectively, it should be implemented holistically across sales and marketing

- Creating content for buyers personas and buyers journeys
- Marketing automation
- ABM
- Monthly and weekly topics to share

Community is a new competitive advantage



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2. Building your personal brand

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Building your personal brand: How does your LinkedIn profile look like?

You will never get a second chance to make a first impression - Will Rogers

- What impression you want to give to your audience?
- Is your LinkedIn profile your CV? (unless you do not want to change jobs, your buyer do not care about that!)
- 1. Take an objective look at your LinkedIn Profile: Do your buyers feel comfortable that you understand their business? Are you sending the message that you can add value in their business?
- 2. Take an objective look at your buyer's profiles
 - Keywords, phrases, trends, the way they measure and benchmark themselves.

Tips:

- Good LinkedIn photo - eyes and smile
- LinkedIn headline is your elevator value statement - do you buyers want to see the titles?
 - Who you help?
 - How you help?
 - Why you help better than others?
- LinkedIn summary completes the story
 - Clear call to action for your buyer
- Leverage recommendations - that validates that you are trustworthy
- Keywords for SEO

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Examples of good profiles from social selling professionals

As a speaker and a sales coach, I'm on a mission to help companies & individuals sell smarter using Social Selling, Digital marketing tools & emotional intelligence. Through my companies I offer various trainings to individuals & companies such as:

- 🌟 Social Selling trainings & webinars
- 🌟 Professional Branding workshops & lectures
- 🌟 Sales Coaching & Sales Training -programs
- 🌟 Social Media trainings such as LinkedIn & Twitter - for effective professional use
- 🌟 Customer Experience -workshops & lectures .

As a sales professional, I was honoured to get nominated into a list of Top 100 Social Selling Influencers in the World (Onalytica 2016), and as a professional speaker I've been selected into a list of Top 50 Speakers in Finland (Speakersforum). My first book about customer experience "Viiden tähden asiakaskokemus" was published 6/2017.

Happy to discuss more:

Sanileino@sanileino.com -> www.sanileino.com

Personal interests: #Lean, #Intrapreneurship, #Growthhacking, #EQ, #Sales, #Startups & #SocialSelling

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17

Sales for Life "Thesis": Those that are willing to learning new skills, and apply those new skills in the market, will outperform their peers.

Sales for Life "WWY": We believe the buyer has evolved and there is a smarter way to serve.

Sales for Life "HOW": We modernize the sales & marketing practices of every business we touch.

Sales for Life "WHAT": We drive measured results by training sales & marketing teams to transition from an analog to a digital sales world.

We accomplish this by helping our customers evolve through 3 stages:

- A. Creating Awareness of a Digital Selling ecosystem
- B. Building a business case for Digital Selling throughout the organization
- C. Scaling a world-class Social Selling training program throughout the organization

Your goal is Social Selling Mastery - the de facto standard Social Selling training certification for B2B companies, battle tested by 400+ companies and 100,000 sales & marketing professionals.

See how these companies now drive more sales opportunities with social selling:

Microsoft, Dassault Systemes, Rockwell Automation, Sprint, Intel, Intel, Vonage, Workfront, Xerox, Kinini Street, Imperva, American Airlines | Sales, Juniper Networks, Cit Capital, SAS, CA Technologies, Thomson Reuters, Oracle, ADP, Kronos, HUK International, MarketSource, Humana, Concostra, HireRight, MTIS, Allstream, FHC3, Spotify, American Express, X3 Communications, New Horizons, Sageity, D&W, Direct Energy, RDC, Vision Critical, Cision, uSung, Tata Communications, SilkRoad, Kofax, ReadyTalk, Kinetix, Deltek, InContact, Direct Energy, ON24

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Social Selling | Sales Performance | LinkedIn Training | Twitter Training | Social Selling Training | Hostsuite Training | Social Media Training | Sales Enablement | Sales Enablement | Sales Effectiveness | Sales Training | Sales Methodology | Sales Talent | Sales Management Training | Sales Agency | Crowdsourcing



One example of good Frosmo profile

You can start with your own, personal expertise and then explain how we help as a company:

With Frosmo companies can develop their front end faster and easier regardless of their content management system, ecommerce platform and marketing stack.

The Frosmo Platform helps companies to enable

- Continuous front-end development
- Experience optimization (online testing, behavioral targeting / personalization and recommendations)
- Data tracking and AI modeling

We are proud to create winning user experiences to many ecommerce and gaming companies around the world, some examples of our customer success stories: *(List the customers you want to highlight here)*

Contact me:
email: xxx@frosmo.com
Phone: +xxxxxx

Interests *(choose yours)* : #ecommerce #UX #CX #digitalization #technology #lifeatfrosmo #frontend #dev

Good links to use in the profile:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wh1fMNj3XYQ&t=19s> Miksus AI speech

<https://frosmo.com/news/>

<https://events.frosmo.com/>

<https://frosmo.com/success-stories/> (or choose your own)

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Find your own voice

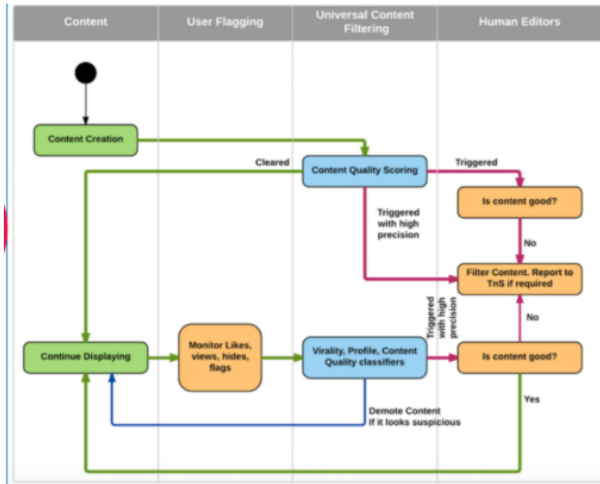
- Are you boring corporate suite or interesting funny and vibrant person?
- What do YOU want to say to your audience/community?

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How the posts work at LinkedIn



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Tips:

- Tag people you would like to get comments
- Important to get the first likes asap.
- Post when when people are in a work mode but not actively working - morning, lunchtime and evening
- Place the links in the comment field
- You can like your own post!
- Try to get conversation going
- Conversation - always answer back to your comments! - if nothing else - use thumbs up emoji.
- Make sure ALL your followers are seeing your posts: Settings & Privacy –linkin takaa → Privacy-välilehti → Blocking & Hiding → Followers



Most popular hashtags in LinkedIn

- #Innovation
- #Digital marketing
- #Marketing
- #creativity
- #Future
- #Inspiration
- #Work
- #Business
- #sales
- #Tips
- #Successful
- #Personalization
- #ecommerce
- #retail
- #CX
- #AI

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4. Grow your network and start building relationships

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LinkedIn process with new prospects



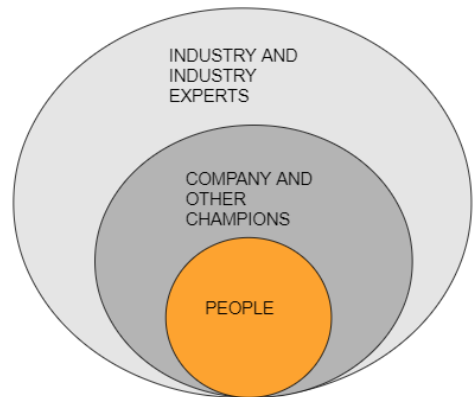
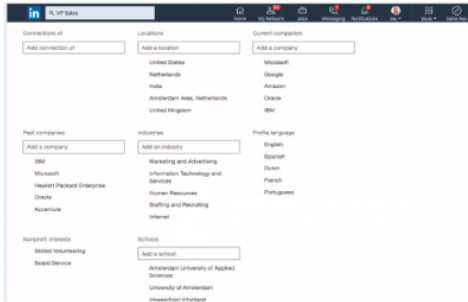
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How to find the right people

- **Why is it important?**
 - You are only able to search up to your 3rd level contacts - more you know people that wider contact list you get.
- **Advanced search**
 - Search for prospects with LinkedIn's advanced search function
 - Save upto 3 searches



How to find the right people

Boolean search

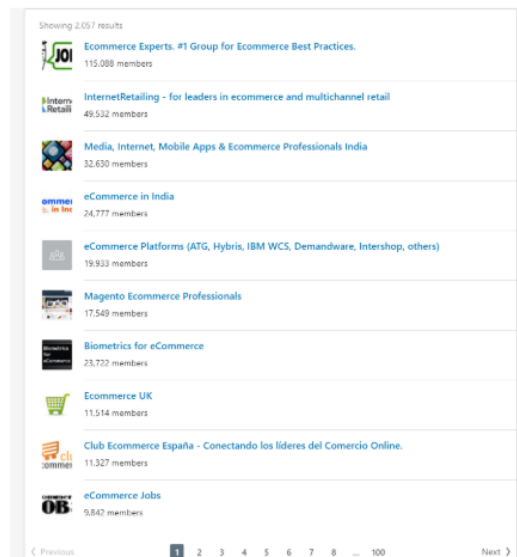
- OR: xxx A OR xxx B (Hybris OR Magento)
- AND: xxx A AND xxx B (Director AND Sales)
- "" capture entire phrase ("Magento frontend development")
- () to capture series of thoughts (Director OR Manager OR Chief) AND Product
- NOT (Product Director NOT Microsoft)

Get organized

- Your CRM is collection of contacts, but your social networks are a collection of relationships
- Your goal is to merge these worlds together so they mirror each other in a 1:1 ratio
- Example:
 - 50 named accounts
 - Average of 5 buyers per account
 - 250 buyers you need find for your social relationships

Follow Groups and people that are active there

You find groups under the Work



Interesting groups found from LinkedIn

- Club Ecommerce Europe - Connecting the Digital Leaders. <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4516502/>
- Ecommerce Experts. #1 Group for Ecommerce Best Practices. <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/73825/>
- InternetRetailing - for leaders in ecommerce and multichannel retail <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/35266/>
- eCommerce Platforms (ATG, Hybris, IBM WCS, Demandware, Intershop, others) <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3803500/>
- Ecommerce UK. <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2665223/>
- Magento Ecommerce Professionals. <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/75041/>
- Ecommerce UK https://www.linkedin.com/search/results/groups/?keywords=ecommerce&origin=AUTO_COMPLETE
- eCommerce Executive Network- Online, Mobile, Marketing, Analytics, Big Data, Security, Cloud, Retail <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2088420/>
- Machine Learning in eCommerce, <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1876896/>
- eTail Conference: For eCommerce and Marketing Executives in the Retail Industry <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1216157/>
- Ecommerce in Europe <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1776673/>
- eCommerce Poland <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2196738/>
- User Experience Insights: eCommerce, UX, Design & Product <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4796020/>
- Testing, Personalization and Conversion Rate Optimization <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1532567/>
- Front End Web Development <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2873427/>
- JavaScript Frameworks : HTML | CSS | jQuery | AngularJS | Node.js | Ember.js | Kendo UI | Bootstrap <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/6610234/>

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How to find the influencers and industry experts

- Connect with people that have viewed your profile. You send an email to thank them for their interests and asking them how you can help.
- Investigate who likes and comments influencers posts
- Search with hashtags and start following them
 - #ecommerce #personalization #ArtificialIntelligence #AI #ML #Machinelearning
- Join LinkedIn groups that your ideal clients belongs to

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Connect: Make the first contact

- Personalization is extremely important
- You have only limited characters to give them a reason to accept your connection requested
- It must be framed from their perspective, not yours.
- Find commonalities, same interests, same University, following same groups, interesting content
 - Research their profile to see what is important to them personally or professionally and include this in your connection request
 - Read what they are publishing and comment on those
 - Influencers are always looking for great content, so share that.



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Examples of the first pitch

I noticed you were talking about CYZ, have you considered this? (content)

Great to see your success....

It seems that we have same interests in ecommerce, it would be nice to connect and share some views on the topic

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WHAT is the worst you can do in LinkedIn

- Spam salezy emails right after the first connection - discussion first priority
- You don't answer the comments you receive in your posts

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Engage: Start a dialogue

- Goal is to establish rapport
- After connection request is has accepted, follow up with a personalized welcome message.
 - Thank you for connecting
 - Start a dialogue by commenting or asking a question
 - DO NOT start to sell and pitch in this stage!

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Engage with insights

- Share your own or Frosmo's or third party content with your own views. If something is really relevant for your clients or prospects you can tag them to inform them about the content.
- What is your own view of the content you are sharing, are you able to get any of your own tips and tricks?
- React with your prospect's posts and/or content with liking and/or sharing and commenting them. Show them you are interested in their views.
- Behave like you would real-world. Have regular contact with the your customers and prospects, bring some value with the content you share, help them to be more successful in their daily work.
- Start conversations in the relevant [ecommer](#) groups

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Start building the relationship

- Add value with a resource they would find valuable or interesting
- Make sure that anything you send is 100% relevant to them (Account Based Marketing)
- Request to move the conversation offline
- Goal is to set up a call or in-person meeting.
 - You must have compelling reason for requesting an offline conversation and how they will benefit from it.
 - NO - Could we schedule a time for a call?
 - THINK - How will they benefit from they spend speaking to you?

“WHAT CAN I SELL YOU?”

- ✓ I care about your money
- ✓ What else can I sell you?
- ✓ Thank you for your business

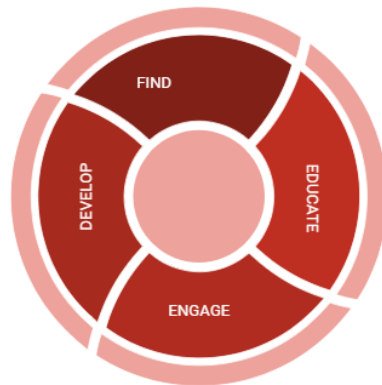
“HOW CAN I HELP YOU?”

- ✓ I care about you and your business
- ✓ How else can I add value?
- ✓ Thank you for helping us do business better

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How to become thought leader: 4 step system for every deal



1. **Find a buyer**, his or her buying committee, and his or hers buying influences, then socially surround all these people to gather market intelligence
2. **Educate** yourself and your buyer to have more contextual conversations that build rapport and trust. Digital insights are key to shaping a buyers journey
3. **Engage** your buyers with digital insights that push them off their status quo so they think differently about their go-to-market priorities
4. **Develop a network** of people that can continue to open opportunities for you. "Your network is your net worth" (Jill Rowley)

Think of your LinkedIn and Twitter profiles as Newspapers. How newspapers generate revenue? They attract more and more subscribers!

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Increased Exposure - Increased Virality - Increased Mindshare

Remember also second degree connections



3. Listening to the signals

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What are the signals that we know prospect might need our help.

- Organizational change
- Leadership change
- Market change (markets, end-users, competitors)
- External factors (regulators, legislations)
- Relationships (customers, partners, new markets)
- Strategic (change of direction or focus)
- Tactical (new initiatives, reviews)
- Events (newsworthy, events and awards, incidents, accidents. sponsorships)
- New jobs
- Works anniversaries

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5. Finding time and setting the goals

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The process

- Social selling is process. If you want to succeed you need to make time for the social media actions.
- Plan the week ahead;
 - What are the content you want to share this week
 - Use timing capabilities with different tools, ie. hootsuite to time your shares.
 - Weekly sharing calendar from marketing to help you.
 - Plan Who to get connected with during the week,
- On daily basis
 - Have some time reserved each day
 - Read the latest news on the industry
 - Read the posts of your prospects and like/share and comment
 - Have a daily share with the goal for starting the dialogue (tag certain people you want to see the post and want to connect)

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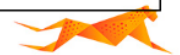
Goals and measurements

1. Get your personal profile to top shape
2. Weekly targets for social selling
 - a. Invite every day 3 more people to your LinkedIn Network
 - b. Share 2 - 4 pieces of content weekly with the goal to start the conversation
 - c. Take part into 1 - 2 conversations daily
 - d. Share, like and comment daily your prospects posts.

1. SSI Index: <https://www.linkedin.com/sales/ssi>
2. Increase of the network
3. Amount of leads generated through LinkedIn
4. Strengthen of personal brand
 - a. Amount of profile views
 - b. Increase of likes and shares of the posts

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7. Tools to help in social selling

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Tools

- Hootsuite.com to manage and schedule social media posts
- Google Alert to get industry insights and news to share
- Leadfeeder - get to know who are already interested and send them more material

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