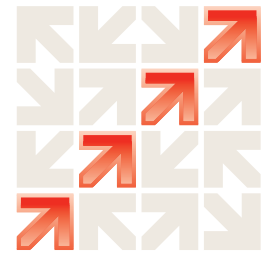


# It's time for sales animals to change their spots.



The last ten years have changed the way we sell – forever.

**CRITICAL MOMENTS**

Out in the sales jungle, patterns are shifting. Over the last ten years, business shifts and technological changes have altered the way sales organisations will sell in the future.

The only way forward is to look back and learn from events that have altered forever the way business is transacted. Most important, is to look ahead with an open mind and try to envision where all this is leading.

Hailed as one of the top 20 business thinkers in the world today, Professor Lynda Gratton, in her fascinating new book, 'The Shift' (2011) describes a future world in 2025 where social and economic drivers have changed the way we work. 24/7 communication is here to stay. The cost of energy prevents as much travel as we used to enjoy and technology has enabled us to work with each other in a virtual business world. Knowledge is digitised as it is now that people need help to solve problems. You can get the brain power you need, often at low cost through the Cloud. The traditional organisation with 9-5 working is a thing of the past. Technology has made collaboration so much easier. Sales people who remain generalist and traditionalist in their approach find they are in competition with people who have specialist knowledge and are just as easily accessible. Forget how you sold in the past. How will you sell in the future?

## **Technology – never before have buyers and sellers been so transparent**

The last five – ten years have propelled sales organisations into a more transparent way of working. Now buyers can inspect sales organisations openly and in detail and sellers can find and mingle with buyers on a number of platforms – just by clicking a keyboard.

The biggest arrival of change in society is technology and we all have to embrace it. The internet has become the platform for all business processes.

Forget spreadsheets – think cloud computing. Forget Rolodexes – think CRM system.

Sales 2.0, inbound marketing and social media's giant leap forward into the business world have prompted sales organisations to ask: Do we need to do it? How do we do it? And what do we do next?

## Less cold calling and more writing blogs, tweets and connecting on LinkedIn

Consider the implications of these newly available technologies carefully, before you leap into action.

There is a theory that this improved ability to obtain and share information, which has speeded up over the last ten years, has changed sales behaviour from an individualistic effort to a team venture.

"Wikipedia is a product of co-creation", says Gerhard Gschwandtner, founder and publisher of Selling Power magazine. "The same is true when you create a sale. It is no longer a result of one pitch to one person, but ultimately amounts to co-creating a sale with the customer."

## Social media's encourages co-creation

This opens questions about whether it needs to be incorporated into business-to-business strategies. I am already working with customers who are using Linked In to check out who they are going to meet.

"Social media is very effective for some companies, but in some scenarios, it doesn't apply at all," says Dave Stein, founder and CEO of ES Research Group, Inc.

Stein observes that technological advancements have woven their way into the fibre of sales organisations' operations. This change irreversibly how salespeople communicate with their customers.

"I read a blog post that suggested every salesperson should be involved with new social media," he says. "Nothing could be farther from the truth. Not every salesperson, company, should be involved with that. But it's increasing in presence, effectiveness, and efficiency. We have to be careful that the pendulum doesn't swing too far, that people don't do that instead of doing productive selling work."

Leigh Hooker, executive vice president of sale operations at Miller Heiman, agrees that has made itself invaluable to multiple facets of the sales organisation.

She warns that the usage of new technological applications should be interpreted carefully. Many companies still don't fully understood what it means to leverage social media or where within a sales process or a company's strategy you should apply it to maximise results.

"The availability of information today has had a huge impact on selling," says Hooker. "The ability to identify key stakeholders and leverage social media to make introductions and connections to key stakeholders in the sales process was much more difficult in the past."

She observes that there has been a discernable decrease in cold calling among many sales organisations.

## Social media is the easy way to transmit the huge volume of new information between sales representatives and buyers

It's social media that makes today's prospecting efforts more rewarding than a cold call by way of a warm introduction.

Gschwandtner goes on to shed light on the fact that technology is frequently considered a silver bullet by executives who fail to consider how to apply the team co-creativity to accelerate results.

### The shiny object appeal to advancing technology's presence

"A lot of people fall in love with shiny objects, and that's not the way to win," he says. "A lot of companies approach tech backwards. To accelerate the sales funnel, one executive will say 'let's buy marketing software,' a second executive says 'let's buy lead management software,' and a third says 'let's buy proposal software.' It's a shiny object strategy and it's not going to work."

Hooker commented, "You really need to understand the processes and business rules you are trying to automate through technology solutions, the technology itself won't make the impact."

The lesson here is yes you need to change your spots to survive in the jungle. But choose the ones that are right for you.

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