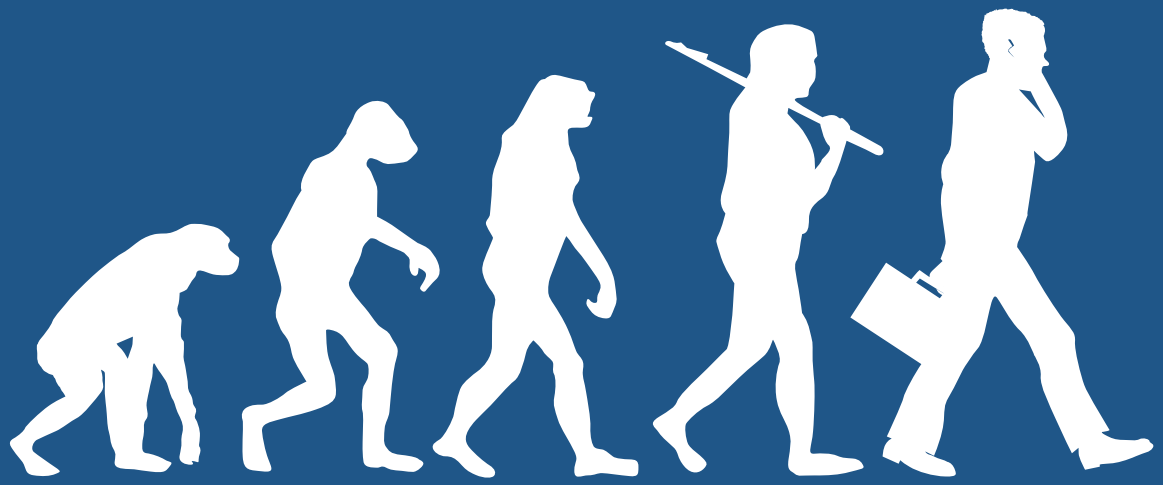


Evolution of the B2B salesperson

Adapting your sales tactics to fit the digitised sales funnel

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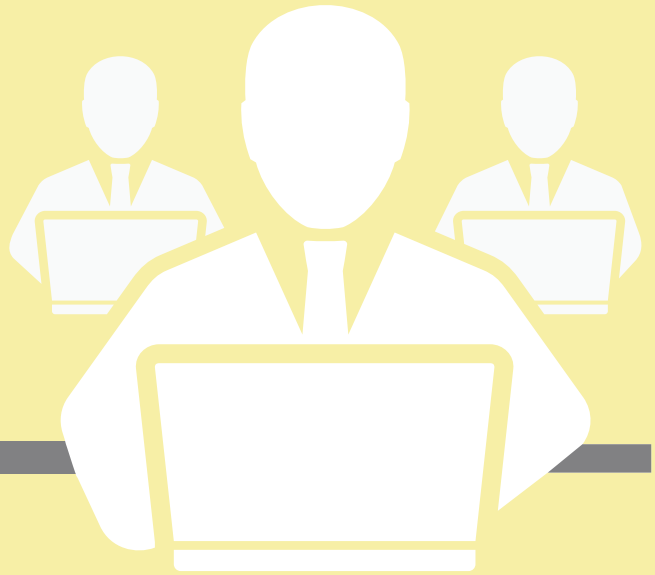
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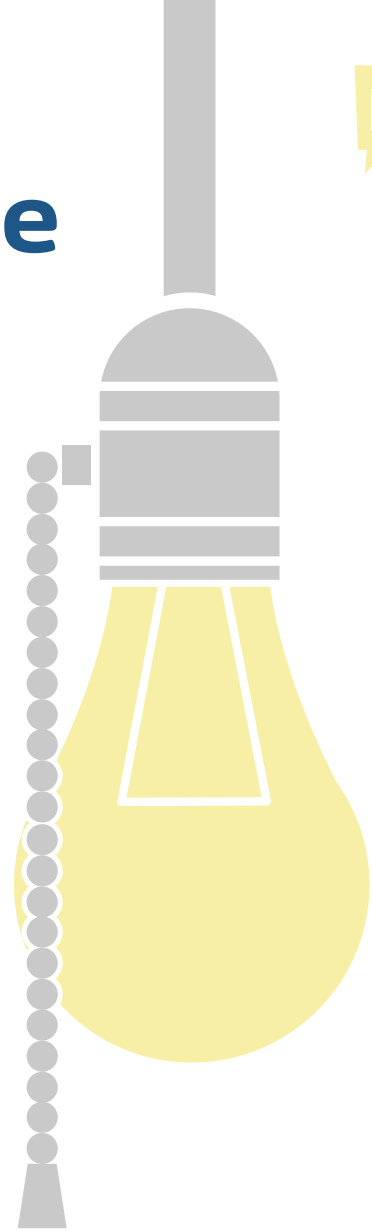
67%



of the buyer's journey is completed digitally

– SiriusDecisions

Introduction: The landscape of B2B selling has changed



Historically, a salesperson would be the first point of contact for advice and guidance on a particular pain point or product. The B2B buyer's initial contact with sales would signal the start of a relationship and the beginning of the purchasing journey.

Now, the balance of power has shifted. Salespeople don't deliver the information anymore, because customers already know it.

According to a recent study by Google and CEB, the average B2B customer will only contact the sales team once they are 60% of the way through the sales process.

This shift in the cycle means that sales tactics have to be adapted if they are to be effective in converting leads to customers.

If the prospect already knows what their situation is and the solution they need, a salesperson starting at stage one of the cycle will almost immediately lose the prospect's engagement. Rather than speak to customers at the opening of the sales funnel, the emphasis has moved towards the end and initial interaction could take place at any point in-between. Therefore, B2B sales teams have to be dynamic and multi-skilled.

To give you the best chance of successfully converting leads to customers, we've put together this guide to help boost your conversion rates and improve your ROI.

58% of B2B buyers engage with peers online

48% follow industry conversations

41% read research papers and postings

Buyers already know what they need

– Breaking out of the funnel

Engage empowered buyers

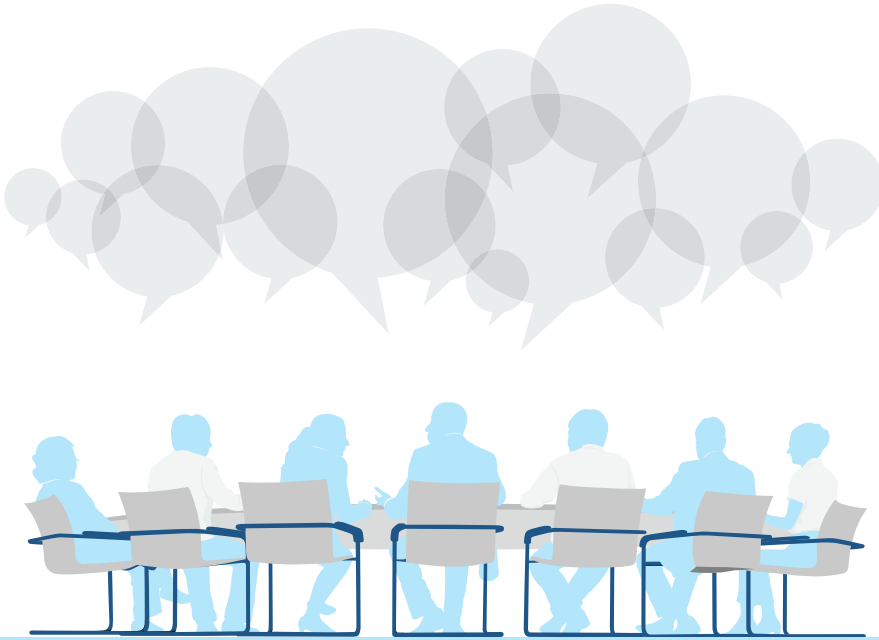
Using a multitude of digital resources for research, the buyer will be knowledgeable about their pain point and how to solve it. They will have sought out trusted reviews, thought leadership articles, and used free trials (if available) of products/services. The prospect's relationship with your brand is already well established before they pick up the phone to your team. Therefore, it's essential that the language and tone the salespeople use reflects this.

It's the death of the hard sell. We have entered a new era of lead nurturing.

It's no longer a case of trying to persuade and convince prospects that your product is the solution for them. A salesperson's role is to provide the human touch – customers need reassurances that everything they have learnt about their business problem and the solution you offer is correct.

B2B customers are complex. Usually, people from different departments will come together and decide whether or not your product/service is suitable for them. The person you interact with will have to demonstrate this on your behalf in order for a meeting or pitch to be deemed necessary. The salesperson must identify and address the pain points of all relevant decision-makers to make this happen.

> On average, 5.4 people are involved in B2B purchasing decisions - Forbes



88% of marketing businesses use social media to generate leads

- eMarketer

Identify customers using multiple platforms

Soft interaction with prospects via social media can be an effective method of starting the sales process on the prospect's terms. Search hashtags, forums and threads relevant to your service/product offerings to find interested prospects.

Social media allows customers to have honest discussions about brands in public without any involvement from the business. Using this feedback, prepare to address negatives and play on positives when in sales discussions.

Business buyers are hungry for information; use infographics and content to engage and inform them – make your company a voice of authority in the industry. There are so many channels available that operate in different ways. Analyse what your prospects use and hone your skills on those.



95%

of buyers choose a provider that uses content to inform their buying process

- DemandGen Report



Align sales with inbound marketing

Inbound marketing provides prospects with the information they need to aid their purchasing decision and guide them through the first 60% of the buying process.

Marketers measure many metrics, including content downloads and conversions, giving them a picture of who is interested in the products/services and why. In effect, content has replaced the traditional salesperson for the first stages of the buying process. It gives prospects easy-to-consume information at a time that's convenient to them.

Once a prospect has read a pre-determined amount of content, they become a qualified lead. It's your job to engage them on a personal level and close the sale. To do so, you must be aware of the prospect's journey up to that point – what they have read and how much - in order to interact with them engagingly. It's crucial that you are armed with the knowledge contained in the inbound content before interacting with a lead. This will give you a lot of clues about the prospect's pain points, objections, and the solutions they are seeking.



88% of buyers said the most memorable communication during the buying process was personal contact with the winning supplier

- Buyersphere report 2013

Are sales still needed?

Salespeople are still a crucial component of the B2B buyers' journey.

Not everyone in the decision-making group will have read all, or even any, of the marketing content. Therefore, they will have varying degrees of knowledge about the pain point and how it affects their business area. You have to be able to gauge how far along the sales funnel they are and tailor your pitching strategy accordingly – only humans can provide the level of adaptability required.

B2B sales often lead to long-term partnerships and involve a lot of money. Therefore, it's vital that all purchasers on the buyer's side trust you. Psychologist Albert Mehrabian identified the 7%-38%-55% rule. It ranks how important words, tone of voice and body language are to building new relationships.

During the first 60% of the digitised B2B sales process, the buyer will only know the company's words (7%). It's the responsibility of the salesperson to cement the relationship using tone of voice and body language (the remaining 93%). Nothing builds trust like human-to-human interaction.

> Almost 70% of completed B2B sales involve human interaction – B2B Marketing

Companies with aligned sales and marketing generated

208%

more revenue

- MarketingProfs

Conclusion: The ‘new’ B2B sales team should be a hybrid of sales and marketing

Although pressure is building on the salesperson in the digital age, there is no need for them to be marginalised. Successful sales teams will adapt to these pressures and align themselves with inbound marketing. The unsuccessful teams will simply fall by the wayside of revenue generation.

It’s up to you to equip yourself with the skills it needs to engage a well-informed and already half-decided lead.

You need to be dynamic. Modern salespeople still have to engage prospects at stage one of the purchasing journey – those who don’t know they have a problem or who are using an inferior product/solution. They also need to be able to pick up warm inbound leads and contact them with relevant information based on how far through the digitised sales funnel the prospect is.

Communicate with marketing through a clearly defined strategy that follows the digitised sales funnel. Every time a prospect becomes a qualified lead through marketing channels, the content they have read and process they have gone through needs to be communicated by the marketer to you. It is then up to the salesperson to get up-to-speed on what the prospect knows using this information and use that to engage prospects.

Thereby, becoming a hybrid of sales and inbound marketing.

B2B Marketing
TOP B2B
Telemarketing Agency

About MarketMakers

MarketMakers are the UK's number 1 B2B telemarketing agency. Having won numerous highly coveted awards, we successfully work with clients across an array of industries and sectors to help their businesses grow.

For over 10 years, our intelligence-led telemarketing has helped generate new business leads and appointments for thousands of global and national clients. Specialising in B2B campaigns we have over 200 in-house telemarketers who work in sector-specific teams.

To find out more about how MarketMakers can help you achieve your sales goals and improve ROI, speak to one of our experts on **0845 485 1164** or email us at **info@marketmakers.com**