



The Guide to Success for the New Digital Sales Team



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Art Waskey is a speaker who truly delivers. In addition to a 45 year career in sales and marketing, Art is the author of multiple books on selling and a monthly column *The Art of Sales*. He shares these insights as an in demand event and conference speaker as well as leadership coach.

In his book *Thriving on Chaos*, Tom Peters states: “If you’re not confused, you’re not paying attention.” **The rate of change in the sales world has been accelerated by digitalization** and I have noted that this has caused a lot of confusion. To put the chaos in order, I find that taking the time to plan a solution to the problem is the best approach. As Collin Powell said, “There is no secret to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.” Let’s look at how to build a successful sales team for the digital age.

Changing Sales Dynamics

Prior to the pandemic, the distributor sales strategy was based on the complementary pairing of outside sales persons with inside customer service teams. Each group had contrasting skill sets. The outside team was the face of the company that brought in the customers. The inside group took care of the details. They worked together to satisfy customer needs.

With the introduction of digital capabilities like ERPs, CRMs, ecommerce, and AI-driven customer analytics, the dynamics of selling have been radically altered. **The digitizing of customer data has enabled businesses to become increasingly effective in identifying and meeting customer demand.**

Today’s inside sales team has new resources that enable it to take on more complex roles. With customer analytics and AI-generated insights on their desktops, they can be more proactive and less reactive.

As B2B buyer preferences shift toward digital communications and ecommerce, distributors have the opportunity to utilize inside sales reps to interact with customers at a lower cost than by using the outside sales team. According to research from Distribution Strategy Group, (“The Inside Sales Playbook for Distributors”), the cost of sales for a proactive inside sales rep is 30-50% lower than for a field sales rep.



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In addition, the average inside salesperson can interact with up to 25 contacts per day, while their outside peers can only meet with three or four.

Expanding Your Inside Sales Team

A report from the National Association of Wholesale Distributors (NAW), “Why Heads of Sales Should Expand Their Inside Sales Functions,” provides a good check list for the steps you should take to build your inside sales team in the digital era:

- Understand customer behavior and interests.
- Make relevant upsell and cross-sell recommendations.
- Know when accounts are at risk of churning.
- Make more connections with small- and medium-sized accounts.
- Reach sales quotas quickly and efficiently.
- Coordinate with other teams and departments for a better customer experience.

Reframing the Outside Sales Team

With the changing role of an inside sales team, the outside sales team’s value proposition role shifts from one that is transactional to one of counselor/partner/profit producer.

What was – Transactional

- product information
- pricing
- inventory availability
- shipping information
- billing accuracy

What is – Counselor/Partner/Profit producer

- manufacturing productivity
- problem resolution
- digital software training

The sales relationship’s basis in trust remains critical, however. The client must believe the field rep is working in the customer’s best interest.

The Objective

The pandemic accelerated the development of the digital tools and systems needed to meet evolving customer needs. These systems exist to help customers better invest their time in improving effectiveness and to ensure a better customer experience.

The objective of a successful digital sales team is to remove any stress caused by these developments. An effective digitally integrated sales program includes the elements covered above and can eliminate much of the confusion that can be caused by a lack of understanding. Put your carefully constructed digital sales strategy plan in place today.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Selling dynamics have been altered by technology with B2B buyers increasingly preferring digital communications and ecommerce.
2. The digitizing of customer data has enabled businesses to become more effective in identifying and meeting customer demand.
3. The cost of sales for a proactive inside sales rep is 30-50% lower than for a field sales rep.
4. With customer analytics and AI-generated insights, the inside sales rep can be more proactive and less reactive.
5. The objective of a successful digital sales team is to remove any stress caused by digital developments.