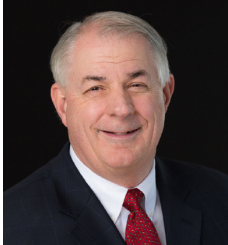


The Hybrid Sales Experience



Art Waskey

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.

A lot has changed in the world of selling in the past decade, including the role of the salesperson. The pandemic put a damper on many of the social aspects of selling. Delivering donuts, buying lunch, and 18 holes on the golf course got sidelined. Even more significantly, digitalization has altered the art of the deal. Reps now have many layers of technology between them and their customers. Information is passed out over the internet and lacks the personal touch. This has led to the misconception that sales reps no longer add value. In fact, the personal relationships a distributor has formed with his customers are still his greatest advantage. People don't sell to companies, they sell to people. Today's sales reps need to be able to combine traditional in-person selling techniques with the use of digital tools. I call this the hybrid sales experience.

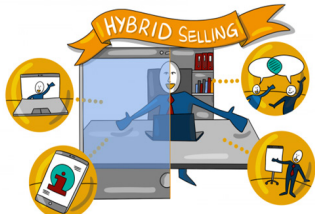
Combining relationships and technology

"A new approach is needed that combines digital and human engagements to help buyers feel more confident in their decisions and drive high-quality deals," according to a recent Gartner press release.¹ So, what do you need to develop this new approach? To start, the outside sales team must focus on added value—helping buyers make the right purchasing decisions. The value of a trusting relationship between sales and purchasing remains strong. People still, "don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." If you combine good relationship selling with the best digital technology, no alternative supply chain channel can beat you.

What Needs to Change

Company Chief Sales Officers (CSO)

1. [gartner.com/en/newsroom](https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom), Gartner Sales Survey Finds 83% of B2B Buyers Prefer Ordering or paying Through Digital Commerce, June 22, 2022).



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need to direct their sales team into a hybrid, guided selling experience. Today's reps must know customer requirements, and their previous transactions and preferences. Gartner recommends CSOs explore the following actions to successfully evolve their hybrid sales strategy:

- Bring together sales and marketing leaders to set a multichannel strategy for customer learning paths, including account-based campaigns and digital sales playbooks.
- Rethink the role of digital engagement by building digital sales tools for real-time collaboration with customers.
- Equip sales reps with probing questions and decision support tools to help buyers learn more effectively and make confident decisions.

The Hybrid Sales Strategy

The data needed by sales reps should be at their fingertips. Reps need to focus on the customer, not on collecting information. According to Kevin McGirl, President and Co-Founder of sales-i,² with the use of AI intelligence, your sales strategy can include:

- Customer behavioral information. Current data predictive analytics can provide an understanding of each customer's interaction preferences. This behavior identification makes it easier and faster to communicate added value to the customer's specific needs.

- Increased sales competency. New and/or inexperienced field sales reps can be supported by faster product and selling skills assistance through advanced digital technology. "How to" information and training for reps on their smart phones can ramp up capabilities quicker.
- Broader information and conversation points. Proactive information covering the reps territory and customers can be more efficiently and effectively accessed. For example, we are all accustomed to using GPS to locate and organize daily travel efficiently. Analytics are now available to broaden information and conversation points.

The Sweet Spot

According to McGirl, AI gathers information quickly and helps sales reps guide conversations to the most relevant customer problems. During conversations, reps can be fully informed and engaged as AI tools identify the most appropriate conversation points and next-best actions.

Combining the outside sales rep's historic trusting relationship skills with the current AI technology is the sweet spot of hybrid, guided selling. You can continue to show up with donuts if that helps to close the deal. But be sure you have all the best technology tools in the bag as well.

2. How to Make Sales Reps Welcome Again, February 9, 2023)(mdm.com/article/tech-operations/technology

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Sales reps need to combine traditional in-person selling techniques with the use of digital tools.
2. The outside sales team must focus on added value—helping buyers make the right decisions.
3. Bring together sales and marketing leaders and rethink the role of digital engagement.
4. Equip sales reps with probing questions and decision support tools.
5. Hybrid selling combines the rep's relationship skills with current AI technology.