



Pivoting to Online Selling



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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.

2020 was a tough year on many fronts, yet some businesses were able to make the most of a challenging situation. For example, a high performance engine manufacturer told me he had his best year ever, despite the fact that his customers, race car drivers, were faced with limited track schedules.

How did he accomplish this?

The owner's two sons, who were part of this family-run business, pivoted to online selling quickly when faced with the social distancing limitations of the pandemic. They took a sales strategy that the company had successfully used in a previous down market and tailored it to a COVID-19 world. When the pandemic hit, they paused engine production and went online to contact their existing and prospective customers in the car racing community to determine how demand would change. Using virtual conferencing tools, they discovered that with the forced slowdown in

racing and other activities, the high performance engine community now had more discretionary money to spend on their cars.

The benefits of online meetings

While there is no doubt that in-person sales calls are still necessary, the pandemic has proven that virtual online meetings are also a viable way to sell. Aversions to online appointments had to be put aside, as virtual conferencing became a way around the limitations imposed by lockdown and social distancing imperatives. Thankfully, this new way of communication has proven to be a valuable way to connect with clients. In fact, many people now view online meetings as faster and more efficient than traditional sales calls.

Here are some of the benefits of virtual conferencing.

- Meet anytime, anywhere – There are tremendous cost and time savings associated with online meetings. These include the ability



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to making more calls, reduced or eliminated travel time, and the absence of wait times. For the business owner discussed above, online meetings brought in more new customers in eight hours than could be accomplished in two days of traveling to onsite prospects. This time savings in the sales effort allowed the company to spend more time in the shop building engines.

- **Putting a face to a name** – Actually seeing someone builds trust. Fortunately online video platforms enable this. The engine manufacturer knew that his customers preferred to deal with someone they could see and virtual meetings provided that.

- **Ease of communication** – Setting up a virtual appointment is readily accomplished through an email in which the client accepts the appointment and then joins by clicking the URL (Uniform Resource Locator). Video conferencing offers features that allow participants to connect via computer, cell phone, or mobile device. The manufacturer above noted that his customers quickly became comfortable with video communication and were actually grateful to be introduced to the new technology.

- **A quick path to the decision maker** – A purchasing decision often requires input from several people. With video conferencing, all the key players in a sale can come together at the same time, even if they are in different locations. The business owner described above

reports that he now invites the boss to attend video conference meetings from the start of a sales negotiation. He finds that his time spent with owners has increased significantly with the introduction of online meetings.

- **Reach a wider network** – Online video enables meetings with potential customers that previously may have been considered too far outside your territory. With the internet, you are no longer limited by geographic boundaries. The engine shop's customer radius had been 30 miles. Today, they are doing business with out-of-state race teams.

- **Better customer follow-up** – Once a sale is made, there is always the need to make sure your customer is satisfied. Virtual online checkups can rapidly measure a customer's approval and prevent problems from lingering. With the use of video, a customer can show concerns or ideas for possible improvements. The engine manufacturer found online follow-up improved their customers post sales experience.

A new era

For all its horror, the pandemic has ushered in an effective new way to market goods and services –online sales communications. This format is certain to remain an important part of business going forward. Professional sales people need to embrace video conferencing and hone their online skills.

5 KEY SALES TAKEAWAYS

1. The pandemic has proven that virtual online meetings are a viable way to sell.
2. There are tremendous cost and time savings associated with online meetings.
3. With video conferencing, all the key players in a sale can come together at the same time.
4. Online video platforms can broaden your sales territory and enable better customer follow-up.
5. Professional sales people need to embrace video conferencing and hone their online skills.