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A Business Perspective and Insight from
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Selling 2.0
Lessons From the Digital Trenches

We reveal how sales teams are using automated Sales Enablement tools to transform their business and gain an insurmountable competitive advantage. Specifically, we will focus on how salespeople can get insight into how a prospect has been engaged, from first contact through the sales cycle to close.

In other words, we'll show how salespeople can interpret prospect behavior in the digital world. The result: better, more informed pursuit decisions leading to faster, higher close rates and shorter sales cycles.

Imagine...A sales process nearly void of guesswork; one where salespeople track what their prospects are researching – and thinking – without having a conversation or a meeting.

In this new world, cold calls have become obsolete, replaced by a technology that provides salespeople with a real-time view into the prospect's buying process.

What if...at a critical point in the buyer's evaluation, but before they engage with a competitor, an alert is sent to the salesperson's inbox or phone telling him/her it's time to engage.

This is what salespeople really want. In today's competitive arena, it's what they must have to survive. These new capabilities are causing a seismic shift in the traditional sales cycle, ultimately changing how leads are managed and opportunities are converted into sales.

Salespeople who don't have it, want it. Those who have it, say they couldn't live without it. As one office equipment salesperson explained, *"Once you have this kind of insight at your fingertips, you simply can't go back to not knowing."*

Insanity In Action

As we look into 2010, I see lots of sales leaders deploying what I call the "Re" strategy. They are *re*-thinking, *re*-organizing, *re*-doing, and *re*-aligning all the same things they have done before and are expecting a new result in what has become a dramatically different selling game. This is true from the beginning of lead generation, to the opportunity pursuit, to the final closing of business. Let's analyze this further and see what the market leaders are doing that is so different.

For most companies today, the lead production/sales wheels spin in two different ways: (1) sales either scratches out their own leads by prospecting their personal networks, sending one-off or batch emails, or (2) marketing departments turn over long lists of 'leads' – which are typically no more than a contact with a pulse.

In both cases, the essence of effort is thick-skinned people trying to overcome the telephone rejection. When finally presented with a genuinely interested prospect, they are smart enough to stay out of their own way. For the most part, they blindly cold call and email contacts for months, hoping to set up a meeting and begin a sales cycle. Eventually they move on to a fresh list, and classify previous prospecting failures as disqualified leads.

Once DQ'd, the leads fall into a Zombie Lobby, waiting for the "new guy" assigned to begin the blind cold call / email process all over again. Worse, they're never contacted by your company again. Or the cruelest outcome — marketing re-purchases the Zombies for the 3rd, 4th or 5th time. The nightmare recycles and you can't wake up!

In this traditional sales landscape, it's difficult to get a sense of what is (or isn't) working. What are your salespeople really doing, how are prospects really acting, and just how hot are the opportunities they are chasing? Most sales leaders just keep coming up with the next "Re" strategy because they have no better way to attack these age-old challenges.

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Let’s Get Digital, Digital

You see it every day: technology is changing at warp speed. Some of it annoys, some amazes. As sales leaders and professionals, it's up to us to recognize which changes and which advances can have a profound impact on our selling efforts and competitive position.

The use of the Internet for research has produced a radical break in the model of how individuals and companies buy. But, there’s been little corresponding response in the way most companies sell.

There are exceptions though. New technologies – especially automated Sales Enablement tools – provide sales leaders with a way to rapidly respond to this new buyer behavior by aligning your sales process to the customer’s buying process. This alignment translates to more revenue and a stronger competitive position.

Here’s an example of how the Internet has changed conventional "relationships":

> Many car buyers are now using the Internet to do extensive research on makes, models, options, pricing, service, and more, before they ever walk into a dealership. By the time they're ready to buy, they know what they want and what they are willing to pay for it. When they walk into the dealership, there is little need to interact with a sales person. These are self-informed informed buyers and they’re ready to begin negotiations.

Do you have prospects like this? They are potential customers armed with more information about you, your competitors, and the market than ever before. They know much more about you than you know of them.

Here’s a scenario of what the process might look like if the dealership used automated Sales Enablement tools:

> The dealership can “watch,” in real time, an individual prospect’s online behavior as he/she builds a custom model on the company’s web site, choosing specific features and a particular color of paint. (These online behaviors and choices are the typical “tire kicker” activities of a casual shopper on the dealer lot.) When that same prospect returns to the site to research financing options, chances are he/she is getting more serious about purchasing. When there's a search for a local dealer, this prospect is ready to spend money.

With automated Sales Enablement tools, you can customize automatic sales alerts and communication responses. For example:

- When the prospect visits the financing options page, an alert is sent to a salesperson via Smartphone, email, or as a task in CRM with all key prospect information, including web site activity
- Subsequently, the prospect is sent an offer of special financing via email
- Simultaneously, the prospect is added to a lead nurturing program of promotional communications that maintain “digital dialogue” until they are ready to buy

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The class of software that includes Marketing Automation, Lead Management, or automated Sales Enablement can be described in simple terms: It's (1) the gathering and understanding of a prospective customer's online behavior, and (2) the ability to take automatic and/or real-time action on that behavior – whether as a lead or an opportunity.

Automated Sales Enablement tools allow you to have specific individual behavior information pushed, via alerts, to the top of your sales team's "To Do" lists. For a sales rep, this is nirvana.

- How would your forecasting accuracy improve if your salespeople took part in the prospect's evaluation meetings?
- Would your revenue achievement see a significant uptick if you had the inside track on their buying process?
- How would it help if you could deliver the right message at exactly the right time during the solution investigation?

Salespeople Have the Power

The advent of Sales Enablement tools is marked by the emergence of Marketing Automation (MA) software. With MA, marketing got access to online behavior and tools that enables response – automatically or in-person.

Until recently, a lead typically was "qualified" by marketing, then passed on to sales for close or disqualification. Sales could see static information about the prospect, but nothing live or active from that point forward. Only marketing could see real-time online behavior.

I saw my first Marketing Automation system in 2003 and bought it as the VP of Marketing. However, with my background as Sales VP for many years, I could hardly believe the powerful implications it had for sales. It took the major vendors until 2009 to bring this capability to the forefront and place it squarely in the hands of sales organizations.

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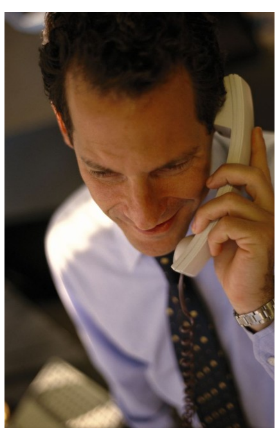
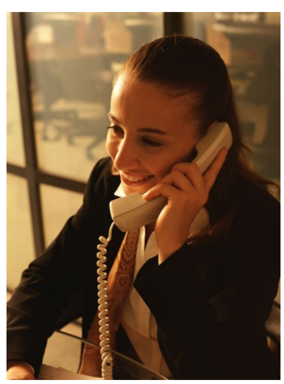
With advancements in automated marketing tools through the addition of Sales Enablement – *salespeople* can have the insight and the power previously available only to marketing.

- Now there are several choices of action. Leads can be (a) qualified as true sales opportunities then closed, (b) disqualified, or (c) enriched by being added to a targeted nurturing campaign that engages prospects in a virtual relationship until they are ready to buy.
- To launch this nurturing campaign, the salesperson simply goes to either a tab in CRM or to the Outlook toolbar. They select from a menu of templates, choose a nurturing campaign, set up an alert for designated online behavior, and deploy the campaign. That's it.
  - *One of two things will then happen: (1) the prospect will be sent the campaign. When the campaign is over, the salesperson will receive an email saying it is time to call the prospect. (2) Or, the prospect will show significant signs of interest demonstrated through online behavior. The salesperson will receive an alert to immediately follow up.*
- All activity – including Web and email behavior – is recorded and scored. A salesperson can send out a marketing-created template to 30 prospects. He can immediately see who opened it and how often it was opened. Did the prospect forward it? If so, to whom?
- Rather than cold call from a "Top 250" list, salespeople can now control their territories and manage many dynamic lists in several different verticals. Once contacts are entered into the system, they are rolled into a nurturing program defined by specific criteria such as persona, timing, vertical, territory, rep, and more. They will receive consistent and pertinent communication from the marketing team and/or directly from the salesperson.
- If a Top 250 prospect visits the web site or responds to any communication, the salesperson can be alerted via Blackberry, cell or email.

The ramifications are dramatic and quantifiable. Salespeople make fewer calls, but make a higher number of *quality* calls. They are calling the right people – those who have shown an interest in talking to them.

"It allows me as a salesperson to enter a contact into a 90-120 day nurturing campaign without having to know any of the mechanics of how that actually happens," said one salesperson we interviewed. "Now I am spending my time focusing exclusively on the hand-raising behaviors that fit my Ideal Customer Profile – those prospects with the highest propensity to buy. I haven't cold called in almost three years."

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Prospecting 2.0

With today's automated Sales Enablement and optimization tools, a dashboard, integrated with a salesperson's CRM, ranks the most interested customers – those who exhibit the most desirable buying behaviors. This way, salespeople can easily prioritize their calling activities toward the most qualified prospects. This is a real-time dashboard that salespeople can check throughout the day in addition to receiving alerts vie email, Blackberry or cell.

Further, salespeople can easily discern the prospect's interest and be prepared to facilitate the education process with the right message at the right time. Prospect digital behavior is displayed in an easy-to-read line-item and graphical format. Before the salesperson picks up the phone, he/she can easily review the prospect's historical activity and demographic data to determine the overall quality of the lead and basis for the conversation.

> "In the old days, when someone told me to call them in 90 days, all I could do was put in a reminder to call them back. Now I can enter them into a nurturing campaign, stand back, and track their behavior," said one office equipment salesperson I interviewed. "The power to have insight into the buyer's interests is a game-changing capability to me as a sales guy. Now I can pick and choose who, and how, I will attack, based on empirical evidence of their behavior."
>
> "My cold calling has decreased by 60%," said another. "Before, cold calling was the only way to reach someone. Now, I can see that they filled out a form, visited our web site, opened my email and researched us online. I can reach 30 people with one message, and, I can track them individually. It's like I am my own marketer."

By reading prospects' online behavior, salespeople can also gauge the strength of certain opportunities over others and more quickly determine which prospects are most likely to buy. This insight and automated response reduces *lead waste*, to which salespeople are typically the biggest contributors. Forecasting also improves because both the salesperson and manager can now "see" how interested (or uninterested) an opportunity is behaving.

> "It helps me learn to get comfortable with radio silence, which can be a scary thing when you have no insight into what a prospect is doing," said one medical devices salesperson. "But now I have more insight about what is going on behind my back in the opportunity. I can read the signs."

This kind of intelligence impacts the way salespeople work opportunities. To build credibility within a prospect's organization, salespeople can include multiple contacts who are not directly involved in the sales process by adding them to various nurturing campaigns to educate them about their solutions. This is an effective way to gain access to all the key stakeholders and decision makers, especially when working with gatekeepers.

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Forecasting 2.0

Insight into prospects' online behaviors makes forecasting a much more reliable process because salespeople have a way to determine if the customer is telling the truth.

If a prospect said he/she would buy in 60 days, for example, but has not visited the web site in the last 30 days, this could mean that the deal is going south. Having this information helps salespeople get to the "no" faster, so they can move on to the next opportunity.

On the other hand, it can act as a confidence builder, providing peace of mind. For example, if the general counsel – someone not involved in the sales cycle – is engaged on the site the night before a deal is scheduled to close, this gives a salesperson confidence that the deal will most likely go through. Before, salespeople were completely blind to these propensities. As my good friend Rick Pages tells us, "Hope Is Not a Strategy".

Sales managers benefit as well. In reviews, managers can see the activities of both the rep and the prospect, enabling them to validate the sales story and build a more confident pipeline.

"We've used Marketing Automation for quite some time. I was a big fan from the start. But Debbie and her group have taken us to the next level—MA is now our primary sales driver."

...Jim Kanir,
Chief Revenue Officer, M5 Networks

Where is the Love?

Automated Sales Enablement tools positively impact every aspect of the sales process.

Quota

Salespeople and managers have better visibility into the pipeline and can make more accurate forecasts. Managers have a more realistic view of territories. Salespeople are able to handle a larger number of accounts through Sales Enablement, creating a *virtual sales headcount* for the organization.

Deal Size

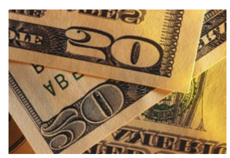
A prospect's online behavior exposes which features and pains interest him/her most about a solution, and whether there is shopping with the competition. Understanding buyer pain enables salespeople to better position solutions and up-sell to a higher-end solution. Knowing if a prospect is shopping around helps keep pricing competitive. Where salespeople were selling on price before, now they are selling *value*.

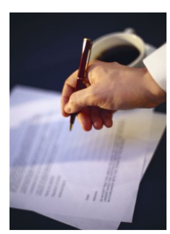
Time to Close

With these automated marketing tools, salespeople are no longer pushing a selling process – they are facilitating a *buying* process. Sales cycles are shortened because salespeople are able to more quickly to understand a prospect's interests and motivations for buying. Armed with this information, it is easier to qualify good deals and drop those who are not engaging. (One sales organization told us it's time to close was reduced from 120 days to just 80-90 days as a result of using Sales Enablement tools.)

Conversion Rates

Conversions from opportunities-to-close improve because salespeople are more likely to have meaningful conversations with prospects and move them through the sales cycle more quickly. Prospects not yet ready to buy are nurtured in the funnel until their behavior indicates they are ready to move to the next stage of conversion. (The same sales organization claimed its qualified opportunity-to-close ratio increased from 8-9% to 15-16% in just 12 months.)





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Marketing and Sales: BFF?

Best Friends Forever? We'll see. The contentious relationship between sales and marketing is as old as the sales process itself. Sales constantly demands more sales-ready leads, and marketing becomes frustrated with salespeople for not being engaged with their "carefully orchestrated campaigns and directives".

Marketing Automation tools give marketing the ability to produce more and better quality leads. It also provides the sales force with visibility into what marketing is doing on their behalf. Better qualified leads transform marketing into a demand generation department and a key player in the sales cycle.

> "Before, marketing was a bunch of spreadsheet jockeys and they were turning me into a spreadsheet jockey as well," said one salesperson. "Now I absolutely pay attention. There is a lot of value in the emails and reports they send me because they are using their knowledge of what is going on behind my back and delivering it in an effective way. If I have half a day to call down a spreadsheet, it is now weighted so that I call the right ones."

You Can't Go Home

Once salespeople have access to the capability of Sales Enablement tools, most say there just isn't any going back to the old way of doing things.

One veteran salesperson in the healthcare field described these tools as "the machine" used to run his business. "Once the machine is up and running, the contacts have been added and the templates begin to go out," he said. "There's no stopping it."

> "I tell my customers all of the time – I have been doing this for 20 years. I have carried a bag, been a VP of sales, I've done it all. I would never, ever go to work for a company that doesn't have this technology," he said. "I finally have a machine that keeps an eye on my business and my customers. I don't have to worry about what they're thinking anymore. For a salesperson, that unknown is what drives us nuts. I don't ever want to go back to worrying like that."

Sales Enablement tools allow you to see, track and respond to prospects' online behavior. But in the end, it's still about the numbers.

> "At the end of the day, it's about success," said one sales manager. "The goal is to make your number, and then exceed it. Sales Enablement tools make it much easier to do that."

Debbie Qaqish has enjoyed 30 years of business success as a sales and marketing executive in software and technology companies. She has been at the forefront of the Marketing Automation phenomenon, first as a beneficiary, and now as advocate and expert. Debbie is recognized nationally as a thought leader and innovator in the Marketing Automation arena.

Debbie is the Chief Revenue Officer and Principal Partner at The Pedowitz Group, a premier demand generation agency. The Pedowitz Group delivers software and services specifically designed to create, manage, automate, and optimize Marketing and Sales efforts utilizing Marketing Automation and Customer Relationship Management technologies.

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