

Is Technology Killing the B2B Sales Role?

Wednesday, November 8, 2017 - Written by: [Jeff Kalter](#)



How Automation Changes B2B Sales

For a while, in the B2B arena, inbound marketing has been attracting prospects, and marketing automation has been providing the data and means to nurture leads. But now, with artificial intelligence, it seems that technology is also taking over some of the hard thinking. B2B sales are complex, involving buying teams with six or seven people, and sales cycles that languish for many months. Artificial intelligence can help determine who's on the buying team, map out organizational charts and figure out intent to make a purchase and what offers could garner interest.

So where does this leave B2B salespeople? Do we still need them? There is still a

role for the B2B salesperson, however, how and where they do their jobs is evolving.

Buyers have a treasure trove of information at their fingertips on the internet about which products, solutions and services might work best for them. However, when it comes to a complicated solution and significant capital outlays, they may need more in-depth, personalized insight from a salesperson. The advice and reassurance they need can only come from human-to-human conversations where buyers can ask questions that relate specifically to their businesses.

The Evolution of the B2B Salesperson

So the B2B sales role is not dead, but how is it evolving?

- **The Consultative Sale**

B2B buyers are not interested in being sold. They prefer to develop a relationship with business consultants who can guide them down the right path. To do the consultative sale right, a salesperson needs to embrace technology and data, share ideas, communicate and collaborate well and focus on business need rather than the product or service she represents.

When the B2B salespeople act like consultants, they can establish a human connection and build trust. These elements are essential for selling a product or solution that's complicated and requires a substantial investment, for instance, an enterprise resource planning solution that links to an e-commerce platform.

- **The Rise of Inside Sales**

Inside sales is rapidly displacing traditional field sales. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the U.S. economy will create 750,000 more inside sales jobs by 2020. Overall, however, Forrester forecasts that one million B2B salespeople in the United States will lose their jobs by 2020. While the overall pool of jobs is drying up, one segment is on a growth trajectory.

Much of the shift in sales models is due to technological advances. Inbound marketing, marketing automation and predictive analytics have eaten into the role of the road warrior who prospects for sales. On top of that, technology has enabled the inside sales person to become more effective. Customer

relationship management solutions help them to manage and grow existing accounts. Online conferencing, social media, click-to-call buttons and even good old-fashioned e-mail make it easier to sell remotely. So if inside salespeople embrace the analytics and automation available to them, they can be more efficient and successful than ever, all at a fraction of the cost of a field sales person.

Finally, buyers have become more accepting of “meeting” sales reps over the phone. Many even prefer it to face-to-face meetings, which can disrupt their days and be more difficult to schedule due to the constraints of travel.

Technology is changing how companies do business. As a result, sales organizations need to evolve to take advantage of the new solutions that enable them to do business more efficiently and successfully.

Call us at +1 718-709-0900 (US) or +39 06 978446 60 (EMEA), or contact us online to learn how you can outsource your inside sales and get rapid results.

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