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The 5 Basics Tools You Need to be a Top Seller

by Trish Sparks, Contributor



Talk to 10 modern-day sales professionals in various industries, and they'll likely mention the same can't-live-without-it sales tools. Investing in building a powerful sales team will pay dividends in driving revenue. Finding the right prospect at the right moment and connecting with that prospect is crucial. New tools help sales teams do it all.

Sales tech has evolved significantly over the past decade. It's now easier to personalize your pitches and use social platforms to find the right contacts. But with dozens of tools out there, how can entrepreneurs know which are right for them and their businesses?

LinkedIn recently surveyed over 1,000 salespeople to understand which tools they need most. Interestingly, the survey also uncovered secrets behind top performers -- those who meet their sales quotas, consider themselves in the top 25 percent of their departments and expect to exceed their target revenues by 25 percent. Here's what we learned about the five types of tools sales teams most often use to source leads and close deals:

1. Social media.

While some companies balk at the idea of their employees surfing the internet during business hours, social media could help them do their jobs better. A whopping 90 percent of top salespeople use social selling tools such Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, compared with 71 percent of overall sales professionals. About 28 percent of salespeople spend three to five hours per week using social selling tools, while 21 percent spend between five and 10 hours each week.

Social selling -- strategically leveraging social media connections to build relationships

that deliver mutual benefits before, during and after a deal -- has become an indispensable part of the sales toolkit. Salespeople are using social selling to focus on the right people, stay informed on key updates and build trust with prospects and customers.

2. Sales intelligence tools.

Sales intelligence tools are not as popular as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and social selling tools, but research shows they're still an important part of the sales stack. One-third of salespeople surveyed employ sales intelligence, with users spending three to five hours per week on these tools.

Another surprising lesson? While millennials adopt these tools faster, older colleagues have some of the best long-term success stories. Generational factors matter less than the willingness to invest time and energy in understanding and using these tools.

3. CRM.

It's no shock that long-established CRM tools like Salesforce and Microsoft Dynamics are a critical part of the sales toolkit. LinkedIn's research found that 33 percent of CRM users spend three to five hours per week using CRM tools, while almost 25 percent of users spend more than 10 hours. Out of all the tools in the sales stack, CRM gets the most time from salespeople. They believe that CRM, along with social selling, delivers the highest value.

New research released by Gartner confirms CRM still is relevant: The worldwide CRM software market totaled \$26.3 billion in 2015, up nearly 12.4 percent from \$23.4 billion in 2014.

4. Productivity apps.

There's no shortage of options to keep business owners organized and productive at work. Box, Dropbox, Evernote and Google Apps are examples of apps with features that allow sales reps to manage their workload and hit quarterly targets. In LinkedIn's survey, 30 percent of productivity-app users said they spend three to five hours per week with these tools.

Millennials are 19 percent more likely than their baby boomer peers to use productivity apps. As a whole, sales professionals are using productivity apps consistently, although not as much as other tools in the sales stack.

5. Email tracking.

While not quite as popular as CRM and social selling, email tracking still sees steady use. Outreach, HubSpot, Yesward, ToutApp and Cadence are just a few examples. Approximately 26 percent of email tracking tool users report spending three to five hours per week on these efforts.

Sales professionals (62 percent) and account managers (59 percent) are more likely than any other professional surveyed to rate these tools as either "critical" or "extremely critical" to their ability to close deals.

DON'T JUST FIX THE PROBLEM. FIX THE CUSTOMER



There is an old customer service saying that has to do with whenever someone disagrees with a customer:

You're not trying to win an argument. You're trying to win a customer.

You really can't win an argument with a customer. It's not that the customer is always right. They aren't. If you've followed my work, you know that I believe the customer is not always right. So, how can you let them always win an argument? First, don't get in the argument to begin with. Sure, you can win the argument, but you lose the customer. But, what you can always do is be respectful. You can let the customer keep their dignity. You can agree to disagree. You can work toward a mutually agreed upon solution. In short, you win the customer, not the argument.

This concept became even more evident to me as I sat in on a meeting with one of the top automotive manufacturers in the world, Lexus. They are known for great cars and incredible service. At one of their corporate meetings they had a roleplay exercise where some of their employees pretended to be unhappy customers and others pretended to be employees at a dealership. It was fascinating to watch great training come to life, as the employees representing the dealership managed the customer's complaints with skill and tact.

One very clear message came out of the exercise. They were not just trying to just fix the car. They also wanted to fix the customer. They wanted to move the customer from unhappy to happy. From angry or disappointed to pleased. From frustrated to fulfilled.

At Lexus, they recognized that a broken car can also mean a broken customer. The challenge is to fix both.

Sometimes a customer is legitimately upset. For example, they may have brought their car in more than once to have the car serviced for the same problem. So, what will make them happy? Maybe the customer wants a refund for the repairs or a credit for a future repair. Or, maybe the customer doesn't want any financial compensation. They just want their car fixed and taken care of by a service rep who truly cares, shows empathy (that one's important) and apologizes for the inconvenience.

You don't have to be in the car business to take advantage and learn from Lexus. Learn what will make the customer happy. It may be as simple as just asking. (You don't know if you don't ask.) It's definitely not arguing with the customer. Find out what's behind any frustration, disappointment, and even anger. Talking it through with the customer, rather than pointing blame or making excuses may be the simple solution. Yes, you may be in a situation that is more complicated than a car repair. Yet, however simple or difficult the situation is, don't argue. You might win the argument, but you may lose the customer in the process. Look for the solution that is reasonable and is a win/win for both you and your customer.



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Why franchising needs to have a little soul



July 22, 2016 | by [Matthew Harper](#)

Restaurant franchising is often an extension of the corporate company: everything has to be exactly the same, or the process won't work. Some restaurants, however, believe just the opposite: every unit should be free to choose how it runs its operations.

What is the right balance between the two?

The answer, says Michael Haith, CEO of Teriyaki Madness, lies in a simple idea: soul. FastCasual chatted with Haith about how Teriyaki Madness infuses this concept into its franchises to strike the right balance of creativity and adhering to brand standards.

FastCasual: How do you walk the line of having franchisees follow branding and protocol but not stifling their creativity?

Michael Haith: With our core values of collaboration, transparency and visibility, we work hand in hand with franchisees to develop new products and processes. We, the franchisor, insist on what we call 'iconic symbols' – the signage, colors and pieces that make TMAD. The rest is a collaboration to express the individual shop owner.

FC: What elements are mandatory for your franchisees to follow or implement?

M: The absolute adherence to the recipes and service parameters.

FC: How do they go about getting their ideas approved? Do they run decor or format ideas by you first or just handle it how they want?

M: They provide the visibility of what they want to do and we work together to test and implement and report back to the rest of the franchisees with results.

FC: To you, what does a "restaurant with soul" mean?

M: It's a little like fine art — you know it when you see it. You also know when it's missing. Soul isn't just about what our teriyaki shops look like. It goes much deeper than that. By allowing our franchisees to express themselves in the personality of their TMAD locations, they feel connected to their own shops. If an owner has that connection to their own shop and takes pride in what they do, the soul seems to come out and take care of itself. We attribute soul to caring — caring about the product we put out every single day and the customer interaction.

Soul is tied to recognition and appreciation for the customer and taking pride in the customer service. Although the profitability of our teriyaki shops are important, the experience and the sincerity of the experience are tantamount to a business with soul.

FC: Why is this important to your brand?

M: Soul is the essence of the TMAD brand. The cookie-cutter-fluorescent light plastic experience of serving pre-portioned frozen food has dominated the fast food landscape for too long. The TMAD culture is defined by a community of people who believe that soulless experience is on the decline. The culture of our brand is built upon a community of like-minded individuals who represent the magic of the local food "discovery" in the convenient, neighborhood strip mall down the street.

We serve awesome, fresh, hot, big bowls of great Japanese fast casual comfort food in a neighborhood atmosphere. It's just that simple."



August Trivia!

- August 9, 1930 is the birthdate of what cartoon character?
*Mickey Mouse *Minnie Mouse *Betty Boop *Bullwinkle *Yertle the Turtle
- For whom is August named? _____ (one or two words)
- August was made longer by adding a day from another month. From which month was it taken?
_____ (one word)
- What are the flowers of August?
*Rose and Peony *Hollyhock and Peony *Lobelia and Rose *Poppy and Gladiolus
- What are the gemstones for the month?
*Ruby and Pearl *Garnet and Amber *Diamond and Amethyst *Sardonyx and Peridot
- In England at one time August the first was known as Lammas Day. A Church service was held during which something was consecrated. What was this item?
*sheaves of wheat *loaves of bread *baskets of raspberries *bowls of peaches
- The Zodiac signs for August are Cancer and Virgo. True or False?
- Which of these African countries does not have a national day in August?
*Chad *Benin *Zambia *Democratic Republic of Congo
- “The Teahouse of the August Moon’ won both a Tony and a Pulitzer Prize. True or False?
- “I’m as corny as _____ in August” is a line from a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. What’s the missing word? (one word)

Answers: 1) Betty Boop 2) Augustus Caesar 3) February 4) Poppy and Gladiolus 5) Sardonyx and Peridot 6) Loaves of bread 7) False-Leo & Virgo 8) Zambia 9) True - 1954 (Pulitzer) 1953-1954 (Tony) 10) Kansas - from the musical “South Pacific”