

Social Selling

The Complete Quick-Start guide



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Social selling is not about selling. It's about leveraging your social network to find the right prospects, building trusted relationships and ultimately, achieve your sales goals.”

Why should you adopt social selling?

You can't afford not to

Today's financial advisor requires multiple skills to attract new customers. Along with your skills in the financial services industry, you need to be sales and marketing professionals too.

When a buyer is considering a financial product or service, they will seek out information digitally. They will do their research. They will see who is an expert in the area and they will choose the most trusted provider they find during their digital search.

When buying, people make emotional decisions. They buy from you because they like you and your offer, not because you sell to them. Social selling is a way to help familiarise your audience with your expertise and make people like and trust you.

The next generation of buyers are Millennials who don't know any other way but digital. But it's not just Millennials, 67% of all buyer's journeys are now done digitally. It's not going to be business as usual any more.



According to ComScore, 82% of the world's online population is reached on social media. Nearly one of every five minutes spent online is dedicated to social networking sites.”

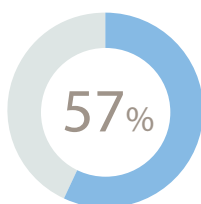
Social media has fostered an environment where our target buyers, prospects, and customers are actually publicly providing information about themselves in real time—their roles, their preferences, what they're buying, even what they're reading. Furthermore, social media provides us with the ability to engage with future customers directly without picking up the phone.

This isn't a setback but an opportunity for you and for buyers. You are more relevant than ever. You have the tools and access to truly understand buyer needs, deliver relevant and compelling messages, find real opportunities from motivated buyers, and create more meaningful one-to-one relationships with customers. For the buyer, you are under constant pressure to provide value, not just a pitch.

In short, social selling is creating an environment where everyone wins.

If that's not enough to convince you, consider this: your competitors will probably embrace social selling—if they haven't already. 65% of businesses are already using social media in their sales / new business efforts. If you don't adopt social selling, your competition will.

The buying process has changed

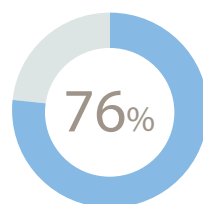


Buyers are 57% of the way through the decision making process before they involve a vendor

5.4



The average buying decision now involves 5.4 people



Buyers want to trust their vendor: 76% prefer a vendor recommended by their network

The Basics of Social Selling



1. Create a professional brand

The most unique thing you have to sell is yourself. In social selling, there are three key elements to your personal brand: your social profiles, your contributions to relevant social communities, and the content you share. You have the opportunity to build trust with your customers before you even meet, letting your social persona show your understanding of the market and the needs of buyers. If done well, you might find prospects seeking you out!

2. A deep network of people

Social selling enables you to find and connect with prospects more effectively than traditional sales. Salespeople have always built networks. Social selling makes it possible to grow your network into the thousands. And it's not just a list. You can follow, communicate, and engage this network continuously. Those with deep networks can identify connections with potential buyers and ask for referrals from customers, friends, and fellow employees.

3. Engage with insights

Position yourself as a subject matter expert by sharing relevant industry content, commenting on news, posting your own updates on LinkedIn and sharing these on Twitter.

4. Build trusted relationships

Build trust with prospects by sharing your perspectives and helping provide relevant information to common pain points. Have genuine conversations and always focus on the needs of the prospective buyer.

5. Social Listening

There are all kinds of monitoring tools you can use to listen in on your market in real time. These range from free apps like TweetDeck to more advanced subscription platforms like Hootsuite. This is an opportunity to eavesdrop on prospects as they share their challenges and frustrations with their jobs and even their current vendors. Social selling is about comprehending buyer wants and needs.



Your professional brand



First things first...

- Subscribe to LinkedIn premium – your first month will be free.
- Build the best ‘personal brand’ you can, i.e., make sure your profile picture is a professional one; ensure your profile is at ‘All Star’ level.
- Change your tagline (if it’s currently your job title) to something more interesting that explains what you do, e.g. “Certified Financial Advisor connecting clients with award winning financial products and services”.
- Join interest and industry relevant groups (at least 20!).
- Tag your connections – work colleagues, long term lead, customer (high value), alumni, etc.
- Get active – like, comment and share posts from your network.

Create a routine

This is the only way social selling works. If you post, comment, engage sporadically, don’t ever expect your social selling to take off.

- Start your mornings on your social accounts, spend 30 minutes skimming updates, liking and sharing content, commenting on job changes and reading articles.
- Your goal should be to keep up with industry news (join groups), stay top-of-mind with particular people, identify new opportunities, and position yourself as a thought leader by sharing interesting, relevant content.
- Accept any pending connection invites and maybe reply with a pre-scripted response, pose a question or request a phone call.
- Check LinkedIn for birthdays, anniversaries, changes in jobs or roles. Congratulate or comment. And make it personal - never use the canned responses.
- In online groups or forums, once you’ve had an interaction with someone, reach out to them with an invitation to connect. Did someone acknowledge or respond to one of your comments? Did someone in a group or forum view your LinkedIn profile? Connect with them.

Top Tip: change the standard ‘LinkedIn’ connection request template to a more personalised one that explains why you want to connect with that person.

Provide solutions

Social selling isn’t just about finding new prospects and customers, it’s also about maintaining and offering value to the relationships you already have. A simple thing such as liking a status update, or commenting on a post they wrote can go a long way. Look for simple opportunities to let others know they are still top of mind.

- Your audience doesn’t care about what you have to sell – they care about you solving their problems.
- Show that your product or service helps them to solve a problem and solve other problems for them by providing informative articles and white papers, video tutorials, and other content.
- Providing a solution will build trust in your readers and followers, who will consider you when they are ready to buy / make a decision on their financial services provider.

Top Tip: For your social selling strategy to be successful, it can’t be taken lightly. If you want prospects to see the value that you can provide their business, they must see a consistent pattern of value, trust and expertise from you on a regular basis.

It's really all about Content



Find and share relevant content

Make sure that the content you share with your network is consistent and relevant. You want to establish your "personal brand" around specific interests and niches so that others know what to expect from you.

Post content as regularly as possible but more than once a week at a minimum. Make sure you add real value - this is how you build an engaged audience who will come back for more.

When it comes to sharing information with individuals, be specific. Only send content that's highly relevant to a conversation. Before hitting the send button, ask yourself:

"Has this person expressed any interest, written a post or made a comment that suggests that they are interested in what I am sharing with them?"

Balance short versus long life content

There are two types of content you can use on social media:

1. **Short life content such as news, event announcements and product launches.**
2. **Long life content such as expert content that analyses a niche topic, goes deep and has longer (recurring) life cycle.**

The key to becoming a thought leader on social platforms is to combine type 1 and 2 effectively. Regularly engage your audience with the latest trends (type 1) and depending on the social platform, occasionally show your deeper insight in your particular industry (type 2).

A rule of thumb is to use the 4-1-1 rule which was originally developed for marketers on twitter, e.g. for every one self-serving tweet, you should re-tweet one relevant tweet and, most importantly, share four pieces of informative/engaging/educational content written by others.

What's great about this approach is that it lets you engage in the conversation, build awareness, and keep in touch with your followers without coming across as pushy or too "me" focused.

Be consistent with your style

Your audience will quickly get used to the way you express yourself. To build consistent and a growing follower base, stay reliable and consistent with your writing style. Of course, how you say things will be different from LinkedIn to Facebook, but keep your style consistent in both places.

How can you do this? Just write you like you talk. Don't be tempted to write long words or complicated sentences if you wouldn't say them in real life. You change your communications style when talking to a client compared to how you speak with a friend - follow the same principle when you're writing.

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The quality of content you share will position you as a thought leader in your field of expertise.”

Tools of the Trade



There are three categories of social selling tools: the social channels, social intelligence applications, and social monitoring applications.

Each day, new applications are hitting the market so the list keeps growing. But here are some of the most indispensable tools available.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the destination for business professionals. In most cases, it should be the foundation for your social selling efforts. Give your profile and activity on LinkedIn regular maintenance, proactively build connections, feed content through updates, follow both people and brands, and participate in groups.

Twitter

With over 218 million users and 400 million Tweets per day, you shouldn't neglect Twitter. Find customers, prospects, and influencers. Share content, advice, and re-tweet. It's a great forum for not only discovering leads, but nurturing them as well.

Google+

Google boasts that 170 million people have upgraded to Google+. It's a young social network. It can be a valuable place to spend time if your leads are on it. Content is easily shareable, updates can go beyond a 140-character limit, and Hangouts—which allows several users to video-conference at once—could be a valuable lead-nurturing function.

Facebook

Facebook has over 2.5 million active Irish users every month, but features a more consumer look and feel. If your customers are there, it could be worth your time. But be careful. Many people simply want to connect with friends and family.

SlideShare

Owned by LinkedIn, the site is like YouTube for slides. It's easy to create your own channel, upload presentations, and let people download them. You can even insert a form, if you're so inclined. This is largely to demonstrate creativity and expertise, though. Be careful with the overt product pitches.

Quora

Quora is a popular question-and-answer forum for the business community. There are two important activities for the social sales person here: establishing credibility by taking part in relevant discussions, and listening in on conversations to identify potential buyers as they ask and answer questions.

LinkedIn Sales Navigator

Sales Navigator is a LinkedIn paid service that allows you to supercharge your LinkedIn usage. It allows you to build relevant prospect lists through targeted searches, retrieve full profiles of third degree contacts, and leverage co-worker connections for warm introductions. It also gives you the ability to send messages to anyone on the network, not just those you're personally connected to.

TweetDeck

Owned by Twitter, this application allows you to create groups of contacts, content types, and hashtags so you can easily follow the content feeds that matter to you and manage several social channels in one place.

Google Alerts

Many salespeople have been using Google Alerts for years and it's worth it. You input specific keywords into Google Alerts. Google searches the web (web pages, articles, blogs) and e-mails you results.

Mind your manners



While social media has created a new channel for you to communicate with prospects and perform research, there's a right way and a wrong way to pursue leads on social platforms.

Social selling tells your audience who you are and gives a first impression. It's your personal brand. Building reputation and adding value takes time and a lot of work.

However, damaging your reputation is easy, especially if you don't pay attention.

DO's and DON'Ts of Social Selling

DO...

BE A TRUSTED ADVISOR

In today's modern era, helping is selling. Try to add value and build trust within your buying community. They'll turn to you when the time is right.

DO RESEARCH

You have the data. Use it. With a combination of social monitoring and intelligence, find out what interests buyers before engaging.

BE AUTHENTIC

Don't be fake or sneaky. Social media has no governing body. Instead the users rule social and they'll do everything to create a safe place to engage. Authenticity is a big deal in social. Violators of this rule are unwelcome.

INCORPORATE SOCIAL INTO YOUR DAY

Social should be part of your daily activity. Set aside time to research, curate, and share content. Connect with people you meet as part of your process.

NURTURE PROSPECTS AND CLIENTS

Social allows you to stay in the hearts and minds of your buying community without having to do the dreaded check-in call or send a thousand e-mails. Buyers will follow people who add value.

DON'T...

TALK ABOUT YOURSELF ALL THE TIME

Bragging about yourself or your company all the time is a turn off. Talk about, and share content—not just yours.

OVER-PUSH PRODUCT

You can't be a trusted advisor if you can't hold a conversation without pitching. Social communities don't want people pitching their products unless asked.

BOMBARD LEADS

You want to be where your leads are, but don't immediately message them on every platform begging to schedule a call or to visit your site. Build a relationship first.

BE NASTY

Social media is not the place to bad-mouth competitors. Stay classy.



Checklist



Whatever your product or service, when selling you are selling yourself. Selling yourself is about helping other people. Helping your audience means genuinely caring for their concerns, researching them and finding solutions for them.

This is why social selling is at the top of any sales funnel. Use it to meet prospective clients and build relationships. Don't try to sell. So when the time comes for your client to buy, you (and your offer) is already sold to them.

How effective are you at Social Selling?

Complete this checklist to find out!

1. I have set goals/objectives for Social Selling
2. I am using tactical tools to achieve my Social Selling objectives
3. I have put defined metrics in place to measure my Social Selling performance
4. I have a LinkedIn and Twitter profile for business use
5. My LinkedIn profile is at 'Expert' or 'All Star' level
6. I have asked clients or customers for testimonials to post on my LinkedIn profile page
7. My LinkedIn title is not just my Job Title
8. I am a member of relevant business / industry groups on LinkedIn
9. I regularly comment on, like or share articles that interest me on social networks
10. I regularly post updates from my LinkedIn profile and share these on Twitter
11. I set time aside in my daily routine for Social Selling
12. I know what content I should be utilising to best achieve my Social Selling goals
13. I am monitoring conversations and responding when relevant
14. I am effectively turning prospects into leads from Social Selling activities
15. I am expanding my business network through Social Media
16. I am getting valuable market research from my Social Selling efforts
17. I treat Social Selling as a valuable investment of my time and resources

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