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DIGITAL SELLING

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES AND TOOLS FOR B2B MARKETING AND SALES

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VALUE
B2B
IT

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Digital Selling

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Successful Strategies and Tools for B2B Marketing and Sales

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Foreword

Digitalization is today's biggest buzzword. The subscription-based business model has not only revolutionized how software solutions are delivered, but it has also played a decisive role in sales and marketing at companies around the world. Umpteen new startups have harnessed the power of this business model to rise rapidly, and transform into feared competitors. These startups have surfed past former market leaders on a wave of success. Even though some sectors and industries seem to more insulated from the impact of digitalization, it is also quite evident to those in these sectors that it is only a matter of time until a more innovative company discovers a shorter, cheaper, and faster, simpler, easier or revolutionary way to transform numerous business models and processes. A "let's wait and see" approach is no longer a viable option in today’s business environment, so allow us to guide you down the path to becoming experts in digital selling.

We’d like to invite you to take the first steps of your journey with us, and together we will examine this phenomenon and the reasons for its rapid success. As we do so, we will take a close look at three major aspects of this phenomenon: subscription-based business models, customized marketing with digitalized sales and customer success management. These sectors have undergone fundamental transformations so that they can keep riding the wave of success, and with the right approach, so can your business.

Despite all of the digital changes, or perhaps because of them, the most important key factor in today's knowledge-based economy cannot be overlooked: human beings. Whether in the form of customer relations, employee retention, or management behavior, human beings have played a central role in digitalization. We will constantly refer back to the people who have played a pivotal role in exploring the opportunities presented by digitalization.

Just as we do in our everyday work with our customers, we hope that you too, will also have many epiphanies while reading this book, and that these will stimulate and inspire you to change your thinking when it comes to digitalization. By documenting and gathering our experiences here, the authors of this book have made substantial contributions to knowledge in this field, and it is from these contributions that you can now profit.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this book.

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1. Introduction

Not so long ago, the concept of ‘subscriptions' only applied to magazines and newspapers. Nowadays purchasing subscriptions has extended into all manner of services and products which suit not only the users but also the providers as they scale their offerings into pay per use and pay per user go-to-market business models. We know this model gives significant flexibility to the consumers as they have greater visibility of and control over their costs and only pay for what they need or use. More recently referred to as ‘cloud solutions,' providers can remotely host all manner of solutions in the cloud and then offer these to their customers as remotely hosted services, usually accessible through the internet. It is often called, ‘On demand software’ or ‘Software as a Service’ (SaaS), and these terms are used interchangeably to refer to subscription-based business models.

Nearly every company has been exposed to or already uses subscription-based software services, which have significantly multiplied in number in recent years. Perhaps the best-known example is *Microsoft's Office 365*, which has captured the first wave of mass migration to Office based applications through their *Office 365* subscription product. A simple monthly user subscriber model controls the costs and gives users flexibility in a few ways. First, by future-proofing the software, updates are automatically delivered to subscribers. Second, as the company's workforce and hence its number of users expands and contracts, subscriptions can be turned on and off on a monthly basis, offering tremendous advantages in cash flow management and when it comes to predicting operational expenses.

In the area of corporate software solutions, there has also been steady growth in subscription-based products. For example, Microsoft has grown their *Office 365* subscriptions by more than 124% in 2016. It is easy to understand how the model gives providers a significantly better ability to plan and to forecast revenue. Constant contact with customers can be more easily maintained, and software updates can be carried out automatically and remotely. Using customer relationship management solutions, providers have decided to make the switch and digitalize sales for solutions such as *Salesforce*[1] and *SAP SE*[2]. In the area of document management systems, solutions such as *Alfresco Cloud*[3] and *DocuWare*[4] can also be obtained from companies by subscribing to them.

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[1] http://www.salesforce.com/eu/sales-cloud/overview/.

[2] http://go.sap.com/product/crm/cloud-customer-engagement.html.

In addition to similar cloud software solutions, other types of services are increasingly being provided and obtained from the cloud, often using subscription-based payment methods. The relocation of platforms (Platforms as a Service, PaaS) or infrastructure (Infrastructure as a Service) to the cloud is no longer unusual for companies. When it comes to the latter, IT resources such as servers, processing power, storage, and networking capacity as well as system backups are provided for a fee based on usage. As for the PaaS service model, services such as operating systems and databanks are made available using this subscription-based business model to facilitate further development and integration of application software. The most obvious ones being Amazon Web Services and dynamic cloud platform providers such as Rackspace and Dropbox.

The findings from our *Channel Partner Study* on migration to the cloud revealed a high correlation between these new business models and the rising value of companies on stock exchanges that have been impacted by them. Companies with monthly recurring revenue are valued significantly higher by shareholders than those reliant on non-recurring income. This finding in itself provides a strong indication of the likelihood that over the medium to long term, more and more companies will sell their products and services via subscription-based business models.

However, in addition to all of the hype and advantages, this shift to centralized business models has had wide-ranging implications on other business segments, notably sales. In fact, changes in sales processes are inevitable despite the success of more traditional sales models such as license sales and complex implementations (which usually involve a significant investment of capital and hence a long sales cycle). The quick pace of changes currently underway has completely upended traditional sales models as a result of migration to the cloud. Hence, the behaviors of both customers (who are growing more and more aware of cloud solutions) and sales professionals (who have previously devoted themselves to long and complicated sales cycles) are now being dragged kicking and screaming into selling seats in the cloud, with hosted solutions and subscriber models.

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[3] http://www.alfresco.com/products/enterprise-content-management/cloud.

[4] http://www.docuware-online.com.

In the course of the *Channel Partner Study*, we analyzed more than 100 software and computer retailers in over 20 countries, focusing on their transitions from traditional on-site sales to subscription-based sales models.[5]The company-wide analyses we carried out included all key areas in cloud-based business segments. The study was not limited only to the area of sales but also examined important sub-areas such as strategy, business models as well as marketing and product strategies. Throughout the analyses and the customer projects upon which they were based, "best practices" and related concepts were revealed and perfected to pave the way for our customers' sustainable success. This book summarizes and highlights the vital experiences and findings. With a particular focus on what you can do in your organization, we provide you with the latest tools and resources to transition your sales team, so they win over cloud customers.

Why should I read this book?

We have written this book for people and organizations who are being subjected to the profound changes digitalization is having on solution providers who recognize the disruption to traditional sales models, especially industries which offer more complex solutions and services. It addresses issues and opportunities for current sales organizations which have to manage scarce resources prudently to mitigate the key challenges posed by the move to digitization and the cloud and to simultaneously position themselves to take advantage of the new frontier in the digital landscape. With this in mind, this book will attempt to answer the following questions:

- What is meant by digitalization and how will it reshape business models to be successful in the future?
- Who lies at the heart of the digitalization process?
- How can you attract, retain, and grow your customers in the age of digitalization?
- How should the sales process be optimized for subscription-based products and services?

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[5] PDAgroup (2015): Channel Partner Study: Success in the Indirect Sales Channel.

- How can the sales process be digitalized?

- What new tasks and responsibilities must be assigned to employees within companies?

- What role does marketing play in the digital transformation?

- How can companies maintain contact with customers in the long-term while minimizing costs and the effort required (CRM optimization)?

Finally, of course, this book will share valuable insights into how the nature of business has changed for providers of complex solutions and services, and also demonstrate the latest sales and marking practices which are leading the way. It is our goal to provide you with the information and tools you will need to reach your customers and establish a sustainable subscription-based business model at your company.

Who should read this book?

As a result of digitalization, a large number of industries now find themselves in the midst of radical changes. Therefore, potential readers of this book should not necessarily be limited to a particular group. An obvious target group for readers of this book is those in senior management and employees of companies that offer complex solutions and services (especially those in the IT and engineering B2B industries). Those businesses that sell customized products which typically require detailed explanations view themselves as a part of a sales process that is comprised of a variety of contacts and decision-makers in different departments at various levels in the hierarchy. These contacts each make significant contributions to the overall decision-making process when purchases are made, and it is their trust which must be earned.

This book's information will also be useful for decision-makers in medium-sized enterprises that must prepare themselves to thrive in the age of digitalization by adapting their strategic tools and thinking so that they can remain competitive in this rapidly changing business environment. This book should provide food for thought for skilled merchants and manufacturers alike, shining a light on the path forward as they consider how they can use digitalization to optimize not only the range of products and services that they offer (along with their communication with customers via various channels) but also their internal working processes.

For example, companies need to switch to service-oriented business models. Avoiding project sales and one-time sales deals allows for more focus on monthly and yearly recurring service agreements which include additional products on so-called subscription-based Service Level Agreements (SLAs), often referred to as ‘annuities’ in the SaaS world. Are you a marketing or sales manager who needs to implement such a new strategy? The chances are that not so long ago you were not included on the project team during the planning and development of the new strategy, and now you are expected to organize the transition from a traditional sales approach to an agile, digitalized sales process as quickly as possible. If that sounds familiar, then this book has been written precisely for you.

At this time, we would like to point out that it is much easier for entire teams, working together, to implement the changes described in this book. In fact, we highly recommend getting your colleagues onboard at the same time, which gives you the power of leverage (sharing and building on each other’s great ideas) and strengthens the commitment to transitioning your company into subscription offerings and business models.

Since digitalization is impacting so many areas of business impacted by digitalization, we believe that having a deeper understanding of present business processes is a critical success factor in the digitalization journey. Hence it is highly advisable to select a team of employees as diverse as possible. Critically, ensure you include a broad cross-section of the organization, particularly Generation Y, so that you have digital natives on board from the beginning. It is extremely beneficial to get fresh perspectives since history has given us numerous examples of where new eyes are the solution to old problems.

Encourage risk taking (within reason!), and agility. The success of recent startups valued in the billions is often attributed to a ‘build fast, fail fast or a build fast, ship fast' culture. Allow all ideas onto the table, engage your team in hackathons to overcome existing challenges in a more light-hearted manner and enable your team to handle initial failures better (even if they would not have been entirely unavoidable using the best methods available to date). What is critical when doing so is that the team learns from its mistakes without any finger pointing taking place. After some initial successes, you can then expand the team step by step because many of these methods can only help you reach your full potential if all employees have been brought into the process. Above all, an important part of this book has been dedicated to marketing, which needs to play a pivotal role in the new sales process.

Whether you are just starting out, or you have already embarked on your digitization journey, this book shares the best tips, ideas, tools, and practices from our research, which we are sure will give you a targeted way to support your digital transformation. Whether for survival, progress, growth, or an experiment, many companies that are currently on the road to digitalization have no real end goal; therefore, this book and the tools we share should guide your business down the right track with the right business model, supporting your success in the long term.

In the very unlikely event that subscription-based products and services are not a pressing topic for your company, then you should first ask yourself why that is even the case. If there is no apparent reason, then you should strongly consider adding them to your offerings. Forecasts show that, due to growing digitalization, many complex solutions will be sold to the service industry in the coming years. We believe it is a ‘speed to market issue,' and the earlier you address this topic, the greater the differentiation and competitive edge you shall have in the future.

How should you read this book?

We know that the daily grind of working in sales, marketing or management can be very demanding. Who has enough time to read lengthy books? That is precisely why we tried to make all of the chapters self-contained, meaning that you need not read the entire book from cover to cover to experience inspirational epiphanies. You can skim through the table of contents and zero in on the chapters that interest you. If you find an individual chapter to be a hot topic and you would like to delve deeper, we have created an appendix where you can quickly and easily access tangible, proven best practices that you can implement, along with highly relevant and helpful instruments and analytical tools. Finally, we have vast amounts of quality resources, related educational and training options to support your digitalization journey.

3.1.3. The Digital Selling Sales Strategy

3.1.3.1. Features of Digital Selling

With changes in the pipeline, significant changes in the demands placed on the sales strategy have come along with them. In our experience, sales should pay attention the following points in order to be successful with a subscription-based pipeline:

- Customers must be reached out to at an early stage via various communication channels during their evaluation phase.
- They are offered free standardized demos and test scenarios.
- Customers are quickly and precisely qualified.
- Sale staff must act promptly and flexibly.
- Sales must pursue many smaller deals in the same line of business, similar departments and divisions.
- The product portfolio made available to customers must be gradually expanded.

Another change to the previous sales cycles takes place with relation to the pace of the process. Customers are no longer willing to wait several days for a response from a company; instead, they expect prompt responses. Many companies in the B2C environment have already amended their processes to ensure that they respond to requests within 24 hours as a strict rule of thumb. In the B2B business, a trend that things are also moving in that direction is clearly visible because customers have adopted these expectations from their private buying behavior and brought them along with them into the business world. This desire for rapid responses applies to the entire buying process. Companies have now begun to respond to this need by increasing standardization and automation of responses throughout this process.

However, fulfilling customers' requests cannot be the sole responsibility of sales. Since a large number of new leads are going to be generated continuously, it is essential that sales and marketing combine and coordinate their efforts. Having a clear strategy will help to standardize the sales process and help prevent the crucial process of lead qualification from generating unnecessarily high expenses. From our experience in advising sales teams, it helps to start with considering the steps of the sales process and to whom the respective responsibilities belong. As a starter to help you determine the necessary internal steps and action items based on the buying process from the customer's perspective, Philip Kotler's model of the buying decision process can be applied, and this will be presented to you in the following chapter. It is necessary to clearly divide responsibilities between marketing and sales to determine which department is responsible for which steps in the process and at which exact point leads are handed over to sales.

3.1.3.2. The Validity of the Familiar Purchasing Processes

We will not put forward a new sales process by the name of "Digital Selling". Rather, we would like to build a comprehensive strategy based on Kotler's well-known buying decision process. The phases of this model also remain relevant and valid when it comes to digital selling. Additionally, the process enables us to focus on things from the customer's perspective.

The purchasing process, also commonly referred to as the consumer buying decision process, describes the steps customers follow when purchasing a new product or service. The five-stage model from the founder of modern marketing theory, Philip Kotler, is now widely used and should also serve as our basis for constructing a digital selling model. Accordingly, the process that customers pass through when making a buying decision is divided into five phases:

- Problem Recognition
- Information Search
- Evaluation of Alternatives
- Purchase Decision
- Post-purchase Behavior

This five-stepped buying decision process can be depicted graphically as shown in Fig. 5. This leaves behavior after the purchase open to making a repeat purchase of a product or solution.

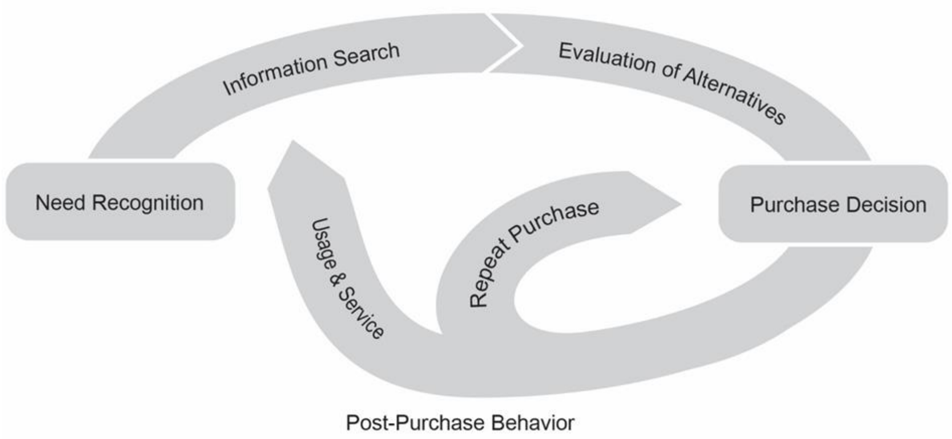


Fig. 5: The Buyer Decision Process according to Kotler [Kotler, P.; Bliemel, F. (2001): Marketing Management. p. 98]

The buying decision process starts with customers becoming aware of a problem or a need. Internal stimuli, such as hunger or thirst, and/or external stimuli, e.g. a radio advertisement, may be behind what has caused the customer to recognize the problem. In the second step, customers more deliberately notice information related to a group of products or services. This can even go so far that they actively search for information via various channels. Family and friends are asked and the Internet and social media are scoured for details. As part of the search for information, customers already begin to notice brands and businesses that they place on their short list. Customers evaluate these brands and companies based on the features that are more important to them. For example, the buying criteria for notebooks could be the price, battery life, screen size, quality of the graphics card, and of course the after sales service and support. Even the perceived image of the brand or company may play a role in the buying decision. Customers form preferences for products and brands that match their buying criteria. The range of alternatives is dwindled down until the customer finally decides on a product. After the buying decision, the customer uses the product or service. This phase is all about the customer's experience with the product and its services which ultimately have an effect on their satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Extending the model of the buying process, Bosworth, Holland and Visgatis have created the psychological buying model based on the research of Neil Rackham. This model shows which topics are significant at what stage of the buying process for customers. Especially in the early days of the buying process, customers are especially receptive of information related to their problems and their needs, while specific brands, products or services and their prices still hardly play a role.

Interest in specific offerings and solutions escalates while assessing the alternatives. Ultimately, price becomes the most important factor in making the decision to buy.

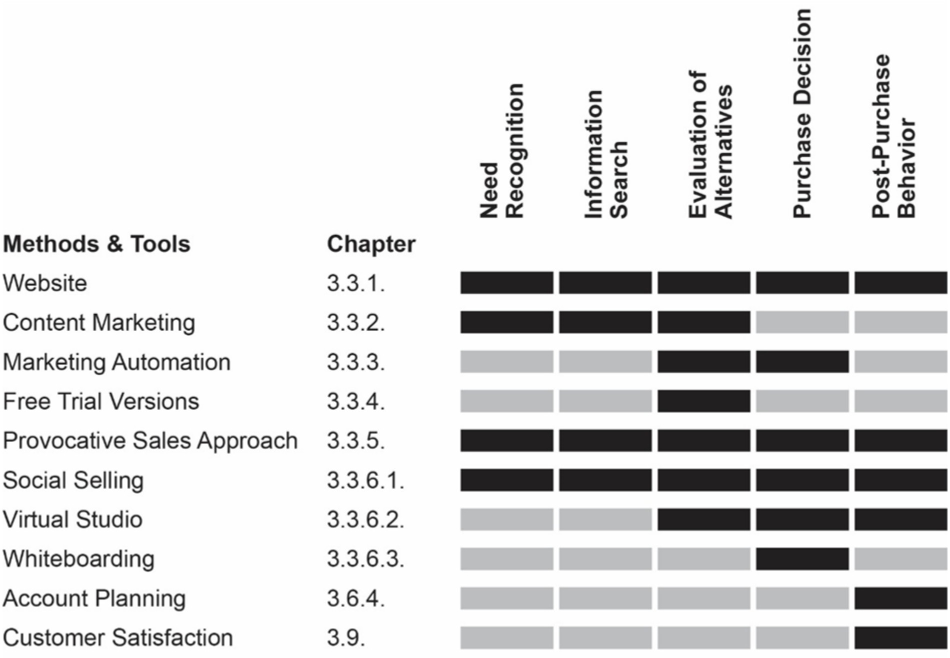
However, what the psychological buying model left out is the phase after the purchase. Without a doubt, customers are also definitely perceptive of certain information during this phase. By no means should this shortcoming also be applied to the digital selling sales strategy because of the importance of that step, which is vital to the sales of subscription-based products and services.

Nevertheless, the psychological buying model demonstrates very well that customers are receptive to different information and topics depending on the phase, and they also change their expectations with regard to messaging throughout the consumer buying decision process. The same also applies to the sales approach for digital selling.

Where, however, the necessity for an adjustment arises is when considering the degree of importance of the individual phases, particularly when we look at companies' courses of action and interactions with customers. Here, we are deliberately referring to the company as a whole and not only about sales, since the marketing strategy of digital selling calls for the roles of marketing, sales and customer success management to be seamlessly merged together with strict separation being unnecessary and even counterproductive at times.

3.1.3.3. Extract from the Methods and Tools of Digital Selling

As a result of the developments already mentioned in this book, this book will propose a sales strategy for digital selling. Using the consumer buying decision process, we will show you how to change your focal point, and we will provide you with an overview of the necessary action items and practices for digital selling in this chapter (see. Fig. 6).



Methods & Tools	Chapter	Need Recognition	Information Search	Evaluation of Alternatives	Purchase Decision	Post-Purchase Behavior
Website	3.3.1.	■	■	■	■	■
Content Marketing	3.3.2.	■	■	■	▨	▨
Marketing Automation	3.3.3.	▨	▨	■	■	▨
Free Trial Versions	3.3.4.	▨	▨	■	▨	▨
Provocative Sales Approach	3.3.5.	■	■	■	■	■
Social Selling	3.3.6.1.	■	■	■	■	■
Virtual Studio	3.3.6.2.	▨	▨	■	■	■
Whiteboarding	3.3.6.3.	▨	▨	▨	■	▨
Account Planning	3.6.4.	▨	▨	▨	▨	■
Customer Satisfaction	3.9.	▨	▨	▨	▨	■

Fig. 6: Overview of Digital Selling Methods and Tools

Problem Recognition and Information Search

In the past, IT solution providers' sales teams were involved in much of the buying process. However, thanks to changes in consumer behavior and other factors, change has also taken place in this area. Customers in the B2B environment have already made it through 60% of their buying decision process before they get in direct contact with a provider for the first time. Problem recognition, information searches, the evaluation of the alternatives and the first purchasing decision in terms of the product and company often take place invisible to sales teams and without assistance from any suppliers nowadays. For IT vendors to influence the process before initial contact has been made is, therefore, of great importance, similar to the old-fashioned “first meeting”.

Companies refer to the portion in which customers discover a specific problem or need and want to acquire some information about it as the demand and lead generation phases, and both are fundamental tasks of marketing. As a consequence, the role of marketing has been changed. Marketing is now responsible for a significant part of the sales process in addition to just supporting sales.

Since those interested in your company and its offerings actively search for information, marketing must have comprehensive control of the online presence of your company. In addition to traditional marketing activities such as visits to trade fairs and developing the company's brochure, more and more of marketing's actions must take place online.

For demand and lead generation, marketing manages the web presence of your company, initial corporate communications as well as targeted content marketing campaigns. The aim is to create and spread content relevant for buyers and potential customers so that this content will be found by them and read by the target group. Spreading your message can be done using a variety of online channels including your website, social media platforms and online forums. Once your presence has been established on the right channels, this presence must be maintained over time. Your team should publish content on a regular basis and should be easy to get in touch with should interested customers have any inquiries, for example, via online chat with your marketing team. In addition to these marketing activities, your sales staff can start demand generation measures using social selling. To do so, individual employees use their own accounts to post digital content on social networks to find potential customers, build relationships with them and to guide them through the buying process (see Chapter 3.3.6.1: "Social Selling").

In the end, these methods should be used to gather the contact information of prospective customers, called leads, so that they can be leveraged in the next step.

Evaluation of Alternatives

In this phase, prospects start gathering more in-depth information related to your brand and company in order to size up your brand and evaluate your company. This can still be done without direct contact with a sales representative. For the company, everything basically revolves around so-called lead nurturing (maintaining and cultivating established contacts) at this point.

Content marketing activities are continued throughout this phase. The messaging and the content are tailored keeping the target group value proposition, standardized business cases and customer success stories all in mind—content that should help prospective customers weigh their alternatives. As an IT solution provider, you can provide prospective customers with free trial versions of the software or present a virtual software demo to them to give them a good sampling of your solution. With a high level of standardization, content can easily be generated via marketing automation to reduce your workload and increase your efficiency.

In this step, it is imperative that companies have a well-defined lead qualification process. A "hot lead" is usually used to describe those who download a whitepaper or the trial version of your software that you (hopefully) make available online free of charge, while encouraging visitors to fill out a contact form to gain access to their contact information. In order to aid in this, you can create a qualification matrix such as the BANT-criteria (Budget, Authority, Need, Timeliness) to qualify prospective customers based on those aspects. The BANT-criteria were originally developed by IBM in order to give their sales staff some guidance in selecting the best sales opportunities from a large number of leads (prospective customers). Opportunities are verified, qualified opportunities for selling a product or service to a potential customer. In sales, an opportunity is considered valid if three out of four of the following criteria apply to the customer:

- Budget: Are there currently funds available for the purchase of the investment or will there be in the future? How big is their budget?
- Authority: Does the potential client have (sole) decision-making power to make this purchase? Is he or she part of a group (or decision-making unit) in charge of making purchases?
- Need: Is there a real need for these products or services?
- Timeliness: In what period of time does the potential customer expect the implementation and completion of the purchased solution to take place?

Additionally, you must master the task of transforming those leads into opportunities. For this endeavor, a detailed strategy is the key to success. For example, possible forms of contact are a telephone call to obtain feedback on your software from a prospective customer, an invitation to a demo of additional add-on functions for your software or an e-mail with a customer success story.

A 90-day lead nurturing strategy has proven to be helpful in such instances (see the appendix section entitled "90-Day Micro Strategy"). Here, standardized actions, which a lead must go through within 90 days, are marked along a 90-day timeline. This checklist can then be processed by sales once you get a new lead from marketing.

Whatever your plan of attack, it is important that you follow-up with the client provides them with some kind of value. This is also possible in Win/Loss reviews, where you can pinpoint reasons why customers did or did not proceed with your solution, which will reveal value and or gaps in perceived value. Obviously, you don’t call and prospects if a buying decision has already been made, there are more subtle ways to pique their influence, for example, you can send the lead a customer success story closely related to their industry and needs, to make it relevant and compelling for them. In the end, you must ideally turn your leads into allies if you want to have a chance to earn their interest and respect for you and your solution.

Purchase Decision

During the purchase decision phase is when traditional sales actions such as handling objections, price negotiations and issuing tenders finally take place.

Keep in mind that, during this crucial phase, IT purchasing decisions are not made by individual managers. These complex decisions are made by a decision-making unit (also commonly referred to as the buying center), and potential solutions have to undergo a series of evaluations and an approval process. These new structures limit the chances of gaining direct address to the customer.

Here, it is important that you demonstrate the good intentions of your contact with them by providing them with materials to prove the value of your product to the customer. Your salespeople are responsible for motivating your "allies" and empowering them to advocate on your behalf inside their organization. The materials provided by you should demonstrate two things: the impact that your software will have on the customer's business and how easy their work will be once the software is implemented in their line of business, area of specialty or department. The creation of a business case can also aid you here in order to demonstrate how the solution can make a positive impact on the business or department.

In particular, the use of marketing approaches like provocative sales or value selling can be decisive during this crucial phase. The latter includes the value-based sales methodology, whereby the salesperson, instead of focusing on the functionality of the IT solution, conveys the advantages that the solution will give their company in concrete monetary terms and construct their sales pitch around that (see Chapter 3.4 "Value Selling in Digital Business"). The provocative marketing approach goes one step further: Here, salespeople question the status quo of their clients in order to generate demand. By shedding light on the current business environment, they provide innovative solutions and ultimately generate sustainable economic benefits for their customers' business (see Chapter 3.3.5. "The Provocative Sales Approach in a Transactional Environment").

Likewise, virtual presentation techniques, (see Chapter 3.3.6.2: "Virtual Meetings with Customers in a Virtual Studio.") whiteboarding and storytelling (see Chapter 3.3.6.3 "Whiteboarding - Visualizations in Meetings with Customers.") all are useful tools that are included in digital selling's toolbox.

Post-Purchase Behavior

By increasing digitalization, the costs of customer retention can be reduced even further because certain actions can be handled in a very standardized way, while still being individually tailored. A notification can automatically be sent to existing customers regarding existing product updates or the latest product enhancements that are now available. The individualized component of this type of communication comes into play once the automation software "thinks" to the extent that, based on the customer's history and profile, it only sends notifications that each individual customer views as relevant to their specific business. If a customer, for example, exclusively makes use of a CRM solution, this customer will only receive messages about CRM-related products. Alerts for extensions to your project management solution that are now available are not relevant to this customer and, therefore, will not automatically be sent to the CRM customers.

The digital selling approach can, therefore, not come to an end after the initial sale. It has to become an integrated part of your relationship with the customer in order to lead to additional sales being made regularly. Thus, intelligent mailing systems can send individualized emails to customers based on their behavior as a solution user. By carefully analyzing user behavior, learning materials or promotional content and everything related to solution extensions can be strategically positioned. The role of marketing in building long-term customer loyalty will become even stronger in the future because the sales organization should focus on acquiring new customers.

The next chapter deals with having the right people at your company to implement the digital selling approach. Once again, we reiterate the necessity for sales and marketing to combine efforts with each other, collaborating more effectively throughout the sales cycle, in order to achieve the desired results.

3.2. New Sales Roles in Digital Selling

7. Who is behind this book?

7.1. PDA Group GmbH

PDA Group GmbH is a company based in Innsbruck, Austria that has close ties to academic institutions and was founded in 2007. Within a very short period, PDA Group has asserted itself as a training and enablement partner to multinational companies, making substantial contributions to their customers' success with its innovative learning methods and sustainable training programs. PDA Group's dedication to research and innovation is one of the cornerstones of this achievement. Along with its customers, PDA Group develops new concepts and ideas that are based on academic research and subsequently put to the test when the customers bring them into practice. PDA Group's expertise lies in transforming marketing and sales processes along with companies' strategic business models that go along with them. PDA Group's training and consulting approach is based on sustainably increasing business success by making companies more customer-centric, digitalizing sales and marketing processes and enhancing strategic planning.

With a unique mix of consulting, training & coaching, and recruitment programs, PDA Group provides companies with a strong foundation upon which they can build long-term success and reach top performance.

Consulting

Our targeted consulting approach is focused on improving the factors that make the greatest impact on sales figures. We analyze the status quo at your company, and based on your company's ideal future, we determine which route your company needs to take to get your business from point A to B.

Training & Coaching

Once your organization's key success factors have been identified, we develop targeted and customized training programs that support your sales, marketing, and channel management teams. We strengthen your sales and marketing teams throughout all stages of the sales process.

Recruiting

PDA Group is the driving force behind the Academy Cube job and e-learning platform, helping companies around the world search for talented new IT staff to successfully meet the challenges posed by digitalization and trends such as industry 4.0 or the internet of things.

7.2. About the Authors

Nicolai Barth, MA is a Strategy & Analytics Consultant at PDA Group GmbH. His areas of expertise are strategy, digitalization and sales models with cloud software. Working with more than 100 system houses around the world, he optimized business models to ensure their long-term competitiveness.

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Ben Faranda, a senior consultant and facilitator with PDA Group, has been consulting to and working with the world's largest IT companies, including SAP, Microsoft, HP, Facebook and others, in the areas of sales, leadership, team performance and personal development. With a global perspective and experience, for more than ten years, Ben has worked in over forty countries around the world.

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