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How social media has affected sales and marketing roles

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Social media web sites have experienced significant growth in the last ten years affecting the world of the salesperson/marketer by modifying some of their long-established combined responsibilities. Social media has created an expanded role for company-generated marketing in many cases, and shortened the role of the sales representative who traditionally was responsible for fulfilling these informative tasks. Social media helps with branding and creating trust before a sales call is made.

It was once common practice for the sales person to be on the road for many small, medium and large businesses; acting as the introductory unit of the company (the marketing arm). These sales persons were the messengers. They carried the news of a company's products or services to the waiting marketplace. They were the informers and brand-builders, as well as the closers.

Through a company's social media sites, prospects and customers are well-informed. They can research on their own, interact, and may already have established a comfort zone with a company's product or service before a sales representative is asked to contact them. Knowledge about a company may be based on a social media connection.

While traditional marketing tactics, branding, prospecting, presentations, closing and applying objection skills are still the key ingredients to getting a sale, social media has added a potential asset for all sales and marketing recruits as they enter the job search market.

Having a large audience on social media can influence success for those with less sales or marketing experience. A social media participant may have a base of around 140 contacts per networking site. Such sites could be Face book, Twitter and LinkedIn. Some site statistics might suggest an average second level contact potential of 20,000 plus for each of these networks with the base of approximately 140 contacts. This is created by likes, comments and sharing, if the original number is extended at close to optimum performance capabilities.

Networks could be considered a valuable asset to many employers. Someone with 300 - 400 contacts or more on a first level for each of two or three sites could be considered a very valuable asset. If social networking activity involves the type of product or service handled by a sales person or marketer, the site can become a valuable asset. Beware of areas of unfair employer practices as some companies may

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make an attempt to take over or control lists or contacts. Lists of friends, followers and contacts should not be shared.

Sales people and marketers should never be requested or expected to give any information or passwords to an employer, no matter how urgently a sales or marketing job is needed, or what is offered by an employer in terms of compensation for lists. Never suggest that lists become property of the employer as a condition of employment. Keep control of social media network lists at all times.

It is reasonable for a marketer or salesperson to inform contacts of a new position while mentioning products or services, and providing an update on any product or service promotions. Contacts may be used to assist in sales or marketing efforts to reach the goals set by an employer.

Sales and marketing experience and skills remain the most important elements. Contacts in social media will not offset the importance of these two elements. Social media does help with delivering opportunity to the newer and less experienced hire. Social media is expected to create opportunity for both sales and marketing professionals, and continue to grow in importance as a space for networking.