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Increasing Sales Effectiveness in the Age of Insight, Mobility, and Social Business

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When it comes to successful sales processes, one of an organization's fundamental goals is to understand and engage effectively with customers. Today's interaction climate requires customer connections that are authentic, contextual, peer to peer, and real time. Fortunately, the various evolutions in technology, such as mobile, social, and analytics, when applied to customer handling in sales, enable new levels of customer interaction that speak directly to these requirements. Today, sales systems must provide insight into the entire customer view and actively help sellers understand and guide their customers through the buying journey. Thus, from a technology standpoint, sales applications must combine the customer view with orchestration — it is no longer sufficient to be passive and wait for the customer to take action.

This Technology Spotlight explores the trends affecting sales organizations and discusses the role that SAP plays in the rapidly evolving market for sales solutions with social and mobile capabilities, deep customer insight, and customer-buying process orchestration.

Introduction

In light of today's socially connected, mobile-savvy customer, adding social capabilities to the discipline of customer engagement is in the "must do" and no longer in the "wait and see what develops" category. Today's customer comes to the table more fully informed and with a higher set of expectations for the quality of the engagement. Customers are using their professional networks and readily available information to educate themselves and develop the first stage of perception and solution identification. Sales organizations must respond to these informed customers on a peer-to-peer level, ready to interact in a contextual conversation that's relative to the stage of the buying journey.

Modern social and mobile-oriented CRM applications encourage better, more effective customer interactions. They not only enable real-time communication and customer-relevant information sharing but also combine the collective intelligence of an organization's staff via social sharing with context-relevant customer information to make every interaction more meaningful and to deepen relationships. The goal in using socially enhanced CRM is to better understand and manage customer needs and interactions through the addition of socially derived customer insight. This insight and collaboration, combined with buying process orchestration, enable sales to successfully execute down to the "last mile" by creating a personalized and responsive customer experience that builds trust and vendor credibility.

Market Trends

There is a confluence of trends and changes in the environment in which organizations sell and customers buy that collectively have changed and will continue to change the selling/buying experience as we have known it. These trends are affecting organizations, customers, engagement models and, ultimately, the tools that an organization uses to interface with its customers. These trends include:

- The shift of power and knowledge to customers and buying communities

- Social, mobile, and the user experience

- The rise of insight through analytics and the complete customer view

- The shift from automation to orchestration

Shift to Customer Control of the Buying Process

Buyers are no longer content with being "sold to." Equipped with mobile devices and informed by social business connections, customers are more knowledgeable about products and services well prior to engaging with a selling organization. This knowledge is enabled by the increasing use of and reliance on personal and professional contacts for references and opinions as well as the wealth of online information. As a result of this customer self-education and seeking out of opinion leaders, selling organizations can expect peer-to-peer interactions to become a significant influence. Organizations must now harvest knowledge of past interactions with similar customers to glean best practices and share new approaches to solving business problems. Customers expect sales personnel to be fully informed of their requirements as well as have knowledge of them as an entity and more in-depth knowledge of the business impact of their products and services. The conversation begins at a higher level than the "solution evaluation" phase.

Social, Mobile, and User Experience in Next-Generation Sales Applications

Sales personnel crave the advantage. Whether the advantage comes from a new sales process or a new sales tool, sales personnel will adopt an application if using it results in hitting or surpassing their sales target. Social and mobile are two technologies that have had rapid adoption within the sales function as they allow great customer intimacy and flexibility in the sales process.

Social technologies afford sales personnel several benefits that are critical to the modern sales individual. First among them is the previously discussed informed customer. Sales needs to be a witness to and part of the conversation as prospects and customers capture information in the social world. Through being active in social networks, sales can watch and listen as customers proceed on their own through the early stages of product awareness. Second, sales personnel can monitor that same process to evaluate when the time is right for them to enter the conversation. Third, sales personnel can use the social network to present themselves as influencers. By establishing themselves in social by tweeting externally, blogging, and responding to queries, individual sales personnel can establish credibility with the buying community. Finally, sales personnel can use social as a means of collaboration through an enterprise social network or through activity streams within applications. This can facilitate the connection of people inside and outside the firewall to facilitate information sharing and collaboration in the context of the sales work process (see Figure 1 for a depiction of social's role in sales).

Social in the New Sales
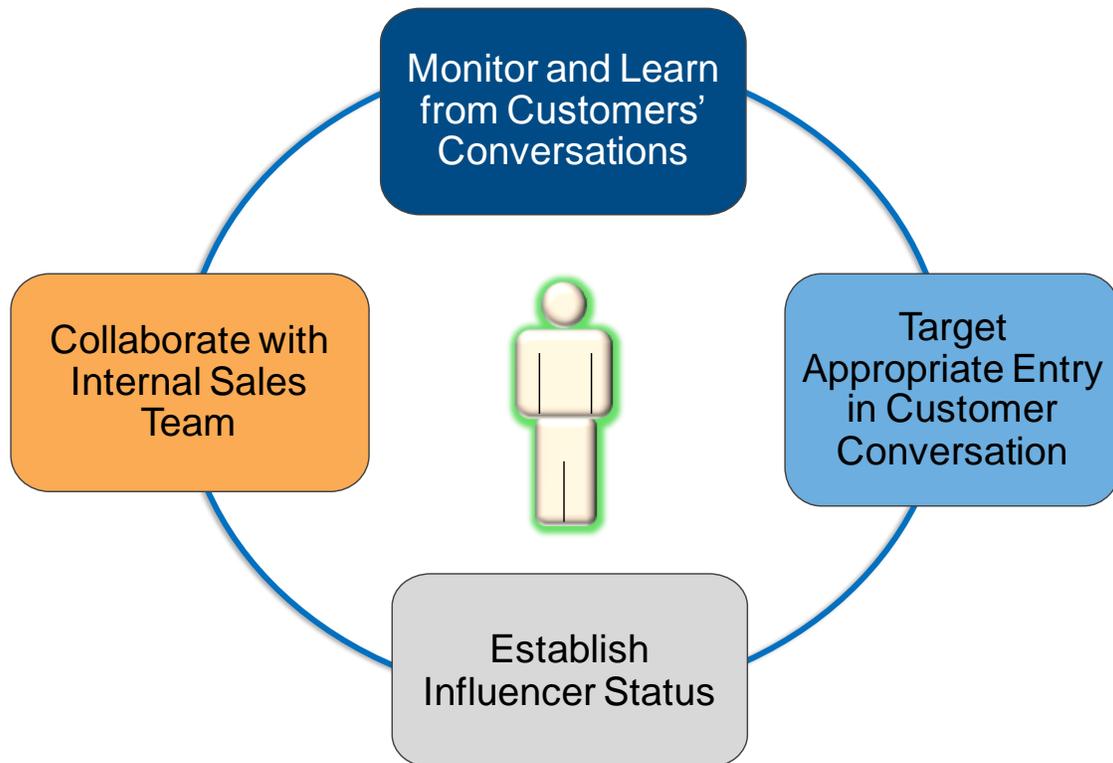
Source: IDC, 2014

According to IDC's *Social Business Survey* conducted in February 2014, generating revenue through direct sales was the second-highest-rated business priority and justification for an enterprise social network within the next 12 months (see Figure 2).

The discussion of social cannot be separated from the discussion of mobility. The mobile social sales employee and consumer represent the modern sales employee and customer — both connected and mobile. Customers and employees are not stationary or tied to a desk or house phone. The mobile function facilitates the continuous conversation that is synonymous with social, enabling the execution of a sales process at almost any point in time for the mutual benefit and flexibility of the salesperson and the customer.

While mobile sales applications have been in the market for many years, they have struggled with completeness of capabilities and usability. With the addition of social in this format, the requirements for these applications have greatly increased. Because of consumers' experiences with Facebook, Google, and Amazon, expectations regarding usability have been set high. Sales personnel don't want to spend time learning applications; they want to spend their time successfully selling and engaging with customers. The more these applications are directed toward specific outcomes and are combined with consumer grade usability, the higher the adoption and penetration they will have within the sales community.

Figure 2

Top Business Priorities for Enterprise Social Networks Within the Next 12 Months

Q.   How important a business priority do you believe each of the following will be in 12 months?
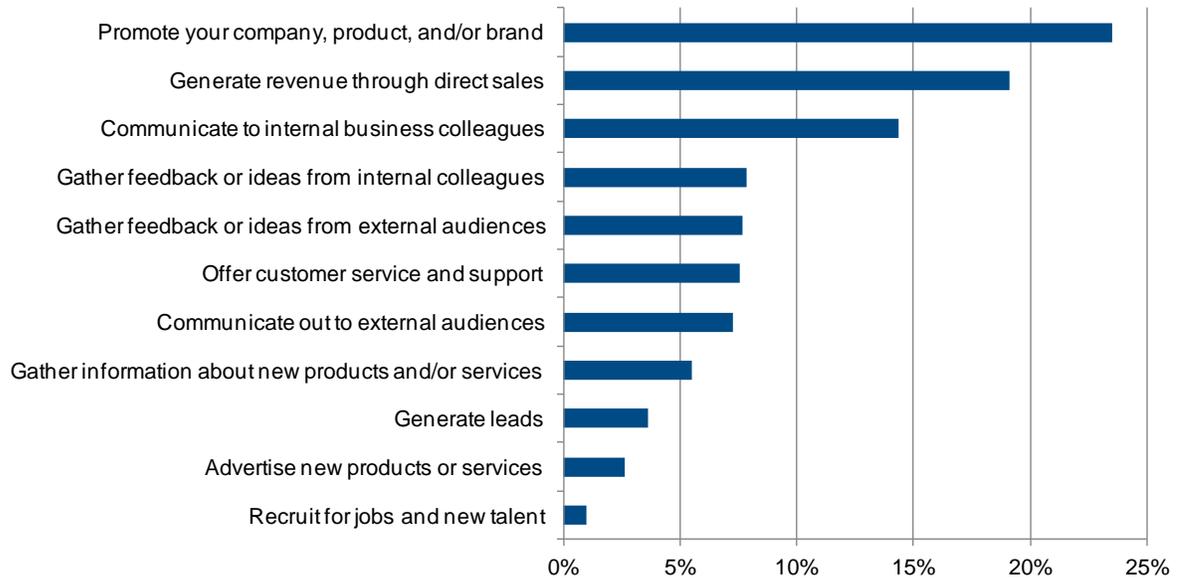
Source: IDC, 2014

The Complete Customer View: Turning Insight into Action

Enterprises have a wealth of information about their customers that they either don't realize they have access to or don't know where to begin to harness it. Smart sales organizations are turning this data into insight and leveraging a new approach to CRM by exposing this insight in the context of each customer so that sellers can turn this insight into action. Creating a complete customer view requires rationalization of existing transactional data with the rapidly expanding world of social and online data in a manner where information is synthesized into sales-ready insights relevant to each customer. For example, CRM systems should sift through the vast amount of real-time news updates, social data, and online information, looking for buying triggers relevant to each customer and the problems that the vendor can solve. This is an example of an area where computer processing and automation must be applied toward an outcome. Sales personnel are in need of analytic capabilities exposed within the context of buying and selling processes that sift out the buying information that is directed toward specific outcomes and relevant to each stage of the buying process — turning insight to action.

From Sales Automation to Sales Orchestration

Finally, there is general shift away from applying automation to discrete elements of the sales process and instead to the overall view of orchestration.

Automation in the sales context has largely meant the tracking of activities and opportunities after they have occurred so that management can create an overall view of what has happened. However, it is largely a rear-view mirror approach and often viewed by sales personnel as management's attempt to micro-manage them. Orchestration puts power back into the hands of the seller, or empowers the seller, to proactively guide customers through the buying process. With orchestration,

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sellers are exposed to best practices, guided selling, tried-and-true content, predictive pipelines, and proven processes to streamline deal closure.

To make this happen, it is essential that the buying process and the sales tools are flexibly tied into existing enterprise applications to expose what is conventionally regarded as "back office" information. This aids the salesperson by identifying the best opportunities to work on, receiving product recommendations based on customer attributes/similar customers, producing real-time pricing, receiving quote approvals, and gaining visibility into inventory. Sellers now have the tools they need to facilitate the buying process but to do so based on best practices that get smarter over time. The end result is that customers have a more seamless and "pain free" buying experience that strengthens relationships and encourages repeat business.

Orchestration across the scope of sales situations and broader business processes drives customer experience handling and is the new focus to gain competitive advantage. This is particularly true and applicable for industries such as discrete manufacturing, telecommunications, and financial services in which commoditization of the goods or service has occurred. The ability to compete by removing latency in response and differentiating on seamless process handling is essential.

Benefits

For sales personnel, the main impacts of implementing modern sales solutions include:

- Connecting to customers' key stakeholders and decision makers by leveraging their network

- Increasing productivity through knowledge sharing and providing ways to find the right expert/information/system in context as needed

- Connecting employees to partners and customers

- Relieving email of tasks that are not a good fit through social exchanges

- Connecting people, information, and systems for ad hoc problem solving and collaboration

- Improved sales enablement due to process orchestration as well as improved customer intelligence

- Increased alignment with marketing

Other benefits to sales include:

- Improved customer experience

- Improved collaboration with other areas of the company

- Streamlined sales processes

- Added cross-selling and upselling abilities

- Improved reporting capabilities

- Insight to action

- Better profiling and targeting

Considering SAP

SAP Cloud for Sales is a next-generation tool for sales. SAP Cloud for Sales has had as its design points the requirements of the modern salesperson and sales organization as discussed previously. These capabilities are grouped into key areas of focus discussed in the sections that follow.

Ease of Use and Sales Effectiveness

- **Productivity, personalization, and user experience:** SAP Cloud for Sales has used external social networks as design inputs and includes social collaboration, tagging, flagging, inline editing, and a concept SAP calls "the Shelf," which enables most-often-viewed content or posts to be kept easily at hand. This allows salespeople to personalize their experience and get quick access to the information they need. Guided selling helps replicate and scale best practices and provides recommended activities and content for each stage of the deal.

- **Collaboration and social selling:** SAP Cloud for Sales with SAP Jam provides collaborative and social selling capabilities. The products track social posts tied to accounts and opportunities and allow collaboration among sales teams, internal experts, customers, and partners across business processes and the end-to-end buying cycle.

- **Sales performance management:** SAP Cloud for Sales enables sales management to view sales representatives' performance and allocate resources based on skills. Managers are able to manage the hiring process to obtain and onboard sales personnel, incent sales behavior, and provide tailored sales coaching.

Account, Contact, Opportunity, and Activity Management

- **Account management and intelligence:** SAP Cloud for Sales provides a modern, streamlined user experience that allows access to a complete customer view. Selecting the view of preference such as table, thumbnail, card, or map, sales personnel can drill down on specific accounts and contacts in a way that brings meaningful information to them and allows them to easily update records.

- **Opportunity management and insights:** SAP Cloud for Sales opportunity management functionality enables the creation, updating, and sharing of opportunities. In addition to managing existing opportunities, sales personnel can use the Quick Create tool to create new opportunities and post to the activity stream to keep others in the team up to date and for collaboration. Embedded dashboards, reports, and analysis tools enable sales personnel to gain insight into their overall performance and perform what-if analyses.

Industry Solutions

Leveraging SAP's strength in industry specialization, SAP Cloud for Sales currently delivers the following tailored, industry-specific capabilities:

- **Consumer products:** Retail execution, including full mobile support, surveys, and visit planning and execution

- **High tech:** Design registration and partner channel management

- **Road map:** An extensive road map for additional industry-specific solutions

Technology

- **Cloud platform:** SAP Cloud for Sales is a SaaS-based offering built on the SAP HANA Cloud Platform. In addition to providing a robust, multitenant cloud application environment, the SAP HANA Cloud Platform supports open APIs for ease of third-party application development. The application configuration capabilities are designed for business users and business analysts without the need for IT involvement. The SAP Cloud Applications Studio enables deep solution extensibility and customization while maintaining the ease of management that is expected with a cloud-based solution.

- **Mobility:** SAP Cloud for Sales directly offers out-of-the-box mobile apps for iPhone, iPad, BlackBerry, and Android devices, eliminating the cost and complexity of custom development, organizational rollout, and ongoing maintenance. All modifications and extensions made to the desktop application are automatically reflected in the mobile versions without the need to provide upgrades or download updated mobile applications. Full offline capabilities are ideal for selling scenarios where Internet connectivity is not available. With the HTML5 user interface, SAP Cloud for Sales enables cross-device support.

Insight

- **Complete customer view:** Through integration with back-office applications, internal customer information from across the enterprise is exposed within SAP Cloud for Sales to give visibility into the entire customer journey. Examples include customer-related marketing activities, social behavior, open service tickets, order status, shipments, and payments. Integration with online and social information sources puts real-time customer updates into the hands of sellers and creates actionable triggers to focus sellers on customers that are ready to engage.

- **Real-time analytics:** Prebuilt interactive dashboards and analytics provide real-time information regarding sales performance to sellers and sales leadership both in the office and on the go, enabling the identification of opportunities and insight into problem areas. The Influencer Map provides real-time contact intelligence aggregated from internal and external information sources and identifies key influencers for each deal and who the corresponding sphere of influence is. Predictive capabilities provide a unique advantage to sales reps. The Deal Finder identifies new leads leveraging event triggers and big data analysis and then scores them for reps based on propensity to close.

Integration

- **Microsoft Outlook and Lotus Notes integration:** SAP Cloud for Sales integration allows automatic synchronization with Microsoft Outlook and Lotus Notes, providing sellers with the customer information they need when communicating with customers while eliminating the need for duplicate data entry.

- **Back-office integration and mashups:** SAP Cloud for Sales provides prebuilt "iFlow" integration and business application mashups to SAP ERP, SAP CRM, business warehouses, marketing automation, sales intelligence, and numerous other applications, both SAP and non-SAP. These integrations allow back-office information to be pushed in real time for key sales processes, such as the production of quotes and pricing and other order-to-cash processes, along with visibility to account- and contact-specific marketing campaigns and customer service activity. These prebuilt capabilities reduce the cost, complexity, and time to value in bringing the back office to the front office.

Challenges

The evolving nature of the customer — and by implication the sales staff — requires a new approach to meet the challenges and opportunities of selling in today's environment. Tools must provide a variety of capabilities, and sales staff must be ready and able to use these tools.

Building the complete customer view and providing insights that lead to prescriptive action require back-end integrations and a bridging of corporate silos. The technology can lead the way, but to move to complete orchestration, team members will need to decide on best practices — a process that will require management support.

As a provider in this space, SAP also needs to provide guidance to organizations, making the transition in terms of process changes and how to create a complete orchestration. Best practices and customer references demonstrating similar journeys carry weight and credibility with end customers.

Conclusion

For sellers to be effective with today's informed and expectant customer, a fundamental change has to occur in what has been generally accepted as the selling process. Sales organizations are not in control of the buying process any longer. The combination of a more highly informed, competent customer means that sales organizations must "up their game" to meet their customers on a peer-to-peer level and deliver more business value at every stage of the buying journey. The extent to which organizations are able to accept this transition and make the cultural changes required will dictate their ultimate success in the new selling environment.

This new climate requires that organizations act on two fronts: through changes to the business process and through deploying and leveraging new technologies. Business process needs to consider and embrace the view of the entire customer experience. Through the orchestration of the customer's journey through the salient business processes, the overall experience can be managed for both the customer's satisfaction and the organization's success. By applying insight derived from analytics to this complete customer view, organizations can then effectively leverage technologies to better understand customer needs, bringing customers new approaches to solving business problems and enabling repeatable processes and consistency. Underscoring this fundamental architecture with the technologies of mobile and social — which are how today's customers engage — creates an environment that is real time and collaborative. Implementing applications, such as SAP Cloud for Sales, that are fundamentally architected for this new selling model will further enhance organizations' chances of success.