



The Savvy Sales Leader's Guide to Building Profitable Relationships

Leverage relationship selling
to connect with customers
and accelerate sales



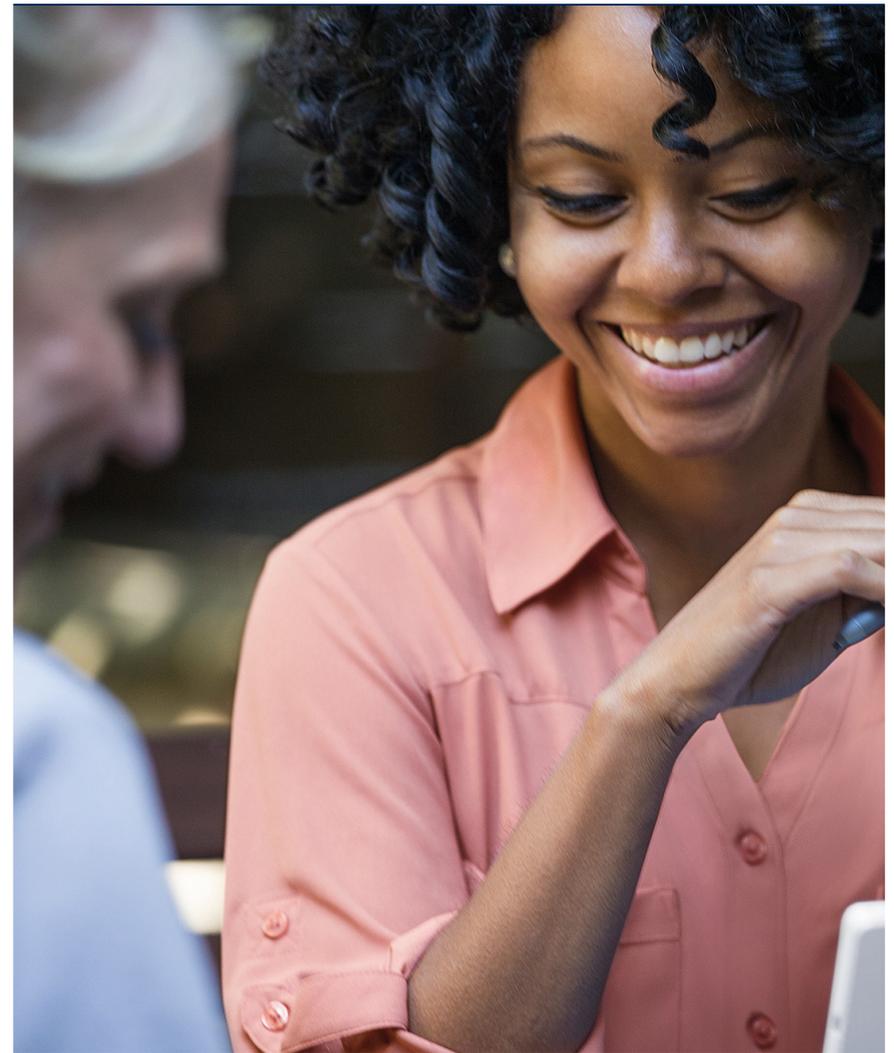
Imagine having a relationship with each of your customers that's built on trust.

If every one of your connections turned to you for help in solving their greatest challenges at every stage of the sales journey, what would that do to your bottom line? If you could provide every new prospect with relevant, useful insights that would make them more successful, how would your sales goals change?

A new model is emerging in the sales landscape. The entire process looks vastly different than it did just a few years ago. Although that's due in part to constantly evolving tools and technologies, the greater difference is in the mindsets of buyers. Understanding that mindset and catering to it is what catapults a successful seller into rock-star seller status.

While this shift brings new possibilities, every stage of the selling process is also rife with new challenges. Greater access means more noise. Countless resources make it difficult to bring real value. These are just a few of the challenges you're most likely experiencing as a seller today.

As the landscape shifts, you can stay ahead by adopting a relationship selling mindset.



Relationship selling is the concept of building long-term relationships with your customers that will lead to future sales. It requires rethinking the way you communicate as a seller—not just in the tools used, but in the way you use those tools to reach out, engage, and develop deeper connections.



Adopting a relationship selling strategy can help you build trust among your customers. And as trust in your company grows, so does customer spend. Ultimately, loyal customers spend **67 percent** more than new ones.¹

You're no stranger to the idea that loyalty is key in selling. Establishing that loyalty requires building strong relationships throughout the customer lifecycle.

This e-book is your guide to navigating the challenges at each stage of the sales process. You'll discover how to leverage modern tools and techniques to find the right prospects, build trust and value for stronger relationships, and identify opportunities to meet, and even exceed, your sales goals.

Let's get started.

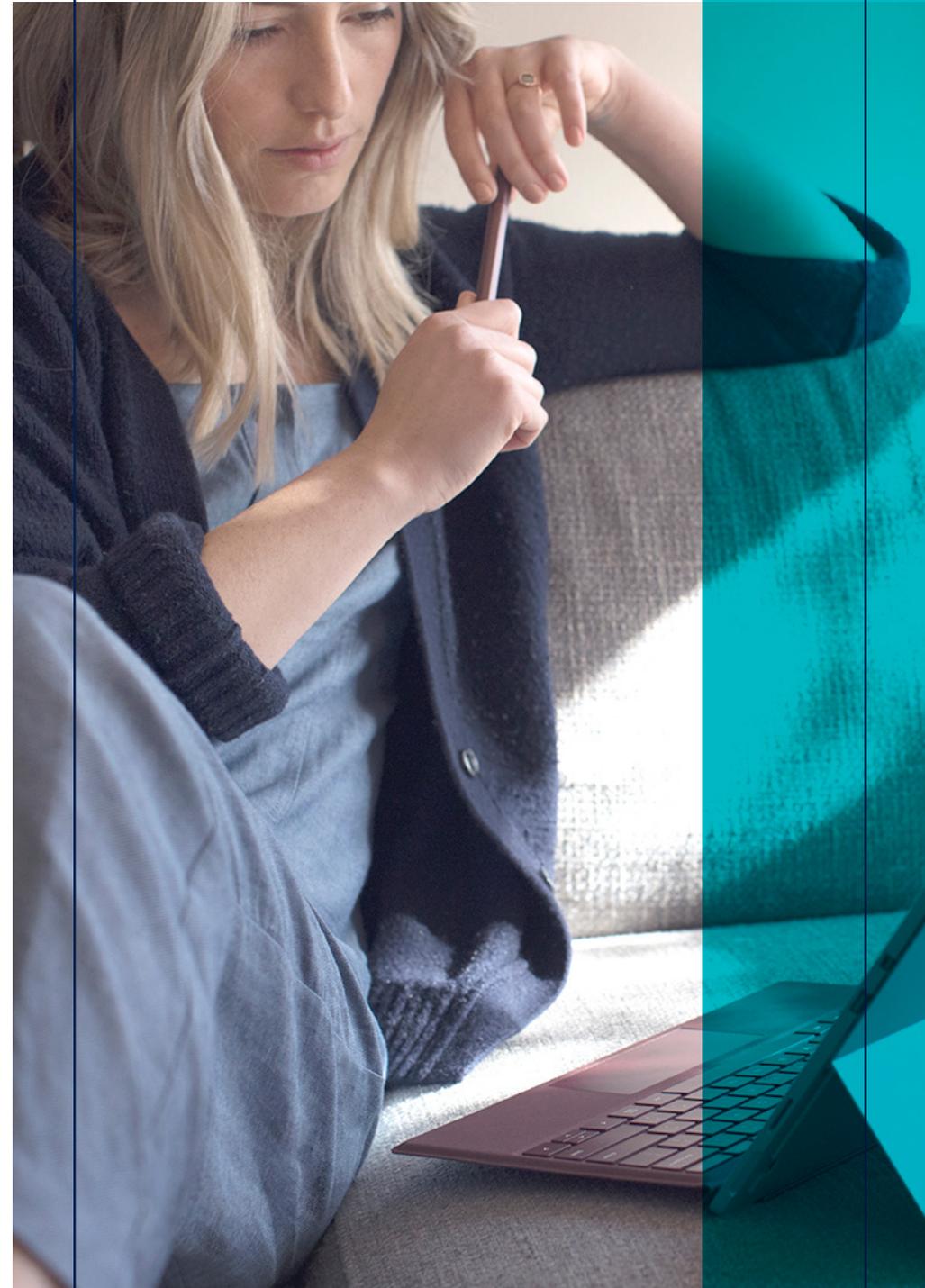




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Stage 1

Identify the right leads

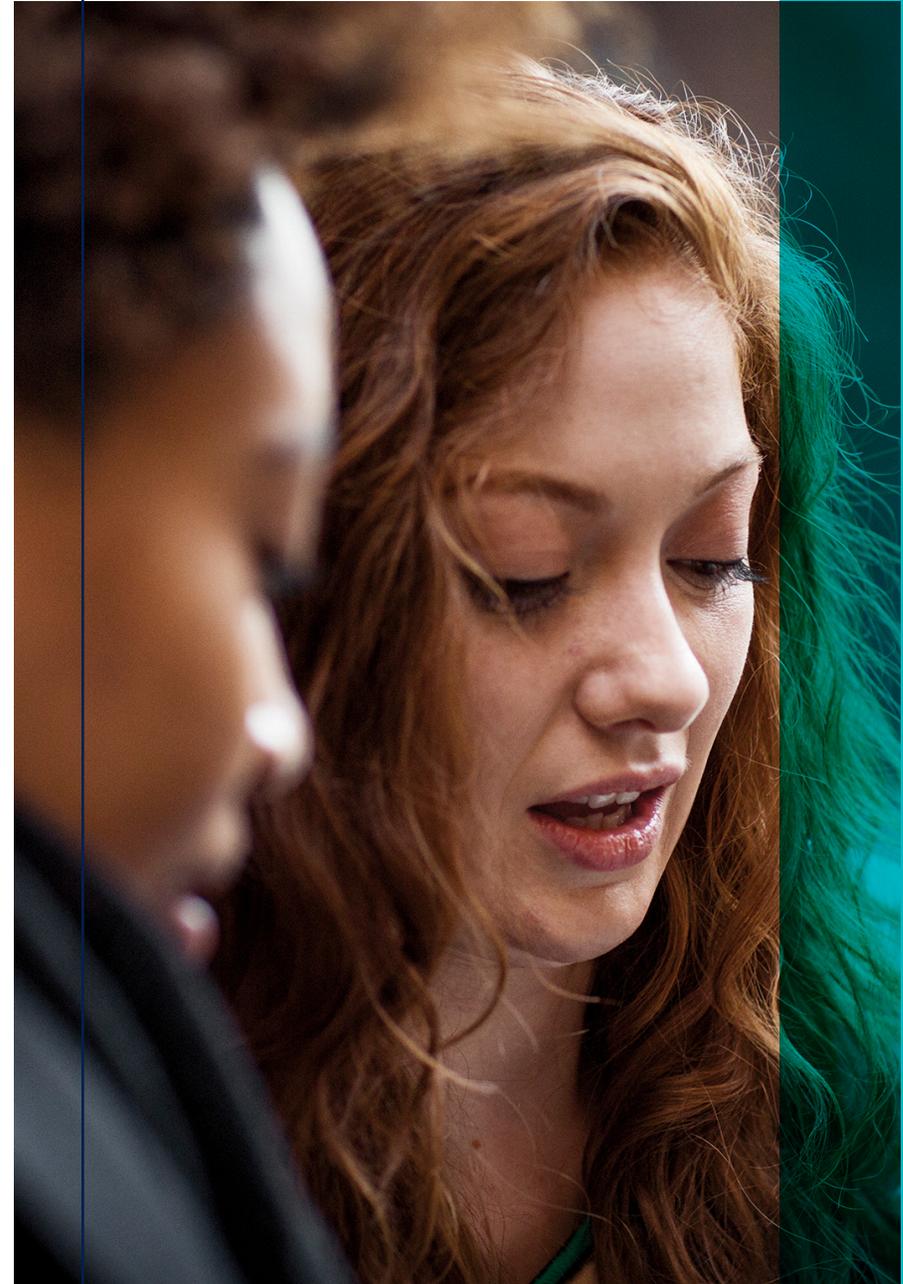
Identify the right leads

“If people like you, they’ll listen to you. But if they trust you, they’ll do business with you.”

—Zig Ziglar

Identifying and creating natural ways to foster and maintain professional relationships leads to deeper connections, long-term loyalty, and trust. And trust translates to healthy sales. At this first stage of the sales journey, you’re intent on identifying new prospects. Not just any prospects, but those who are in a position to make purchase decisions for their company.

You certainly have more resources today than sellers did a decade ago. The internet, social platforms, and professional online groups help you cast a much wider net, but how can you best capture the right ones? Blindly shooting for the moon and hoping you land among the stars sounds great, but it’s just not realistic. There are several challenges to finding the right leads.



Challenge: Identifying key decision makers

Even after spending a great deal of time and energy, it can be difficult to identify the right people. Your job is to build relationships with dozens of decision makers and influencers who work in diverse fields and are responsible for a wide variety of functions. Throw in constantly changing roles and company moves, and you're faced with a seemingly never-ending task.

Solution: Imagine being able to connect with every member of a company's buying committee. Prioritize your efforts and act on valuable insights to target prospects who make the most sense. Then, leverage your existing connections to reach out to new leads and create a list to focus on those that matter most.

Technology makes it easier for you to find "the ones"—in this case, key decision makers and influencers. Access to LinkedIn's professional network can exponentially increase the pool from which you can seek out and engage with new contacts and identify all the potential leads from your first, second, and third connections.

Predictive intelligence can help you augment your search for companies and people most likely to buy based on machine learning, not just on past behavior. And predictive lead scoring can align your sales and marketing team with a shared, objective definition of leads.



Challenge: Connecting with credibility

Targeting the right prospects used to mean making countless cold calls, and repeating the same sales pitch over and over. Today, buyers have higher expectations, and you have better tools that can target new audiences and shorten the sales cycle.

Cold calling has definitely flatlined, but reaching out in other ways—social platforms or email—is still a chilly way to attempt to make a connection. **A warm referral is four times more likely to result in a sale than a cold call.**² But turning cold calls into warm conversations is a tough proposition.

Solution: Leverage existing relationships to increase the likelihood of getting a response from new leads. Broaden your reach by tapping into your company's network and colleagues' relationships for warm introductions. Once you've begun building a relationship with a new account, leverage that connection to find others within the same company. Search for similar connections at other accounts to continue growing your network.

When you locate the right leads, you're halfway to your goal. Your next step is to leverage those tools to make deeper connections, draw insights from data, and communicate seamlessly across any device to grow your customer relationships over time.

Buyer vs. buying committee



A typical company with 100 to 500 employees has an average of **7 people** who are involved in most buying decisions.³ That means more valuable leads and influencers to connect with.



And **20 percent** of professionals change roles every year.

So sellers are faced with the nearly insurmountable task of consistently winning over key players at each account as they evolve over time. The right digital tools can help you reach them all.

Stage 2

Nurture leads and
build relationships



Nurture leads and build relationships

“Your products, services, or solutions are secondary to your knowledge, expertise, and the difference you make for your customers.”

—Jill Konrath, sales acceleration strategist

Working on a relationship is a continuous cycle. It's not enough to connect with the ideal leads; those prospects must be wooed. In sales, that means providing the value your educated buyers are looking for. Imagine what your end-of-the-month reports would look like if you could anticipate the needs of every connection and deliver real value—in the form of useful information that drives business forward—to every customer.

In today's sales climate, that's easier said than done. **But with the right tools, you can tackle the challenges that stand in the way of becoming a powerhouse resource for your prospects.**



Challenge: Capturing buyers' attention

Although tools and technologies have evolved to provide better targeting, buyers are now inundated with messaging. It's difficult to cut through the clutter to get and keep buyers' attention, much less earn a response.

Solution: Fostering meaningful connections is the key to relationship selling. But it's not enough to use the latest technology. You must leverage that technology to capture data before you engage with a customer or prospect at a deeply personalized level, whether that's via phone, email, or in person. Powerful analytics let you discover your prospects' pain points and deliver sound solutions that will build trust. Tap into your customers' social platforms and pay attention to the topics they discuss, the issues they tackle, and the industry insights they share. Customer interaction data surfaces timely, relevant insights that move relationships forward.

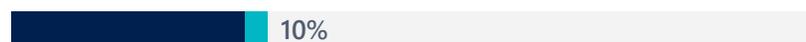
According to a LinkedIn study, prospects who had been exposed to sponsored content from a sales rep's brand were **25 percent** more likely to respond to an InMail from that rep.

Respond to an InMail



And they were **10 percent** more likely to connect with them on LinkedIn, opening the door to new relationships.⁴

Connect on LinkedIn

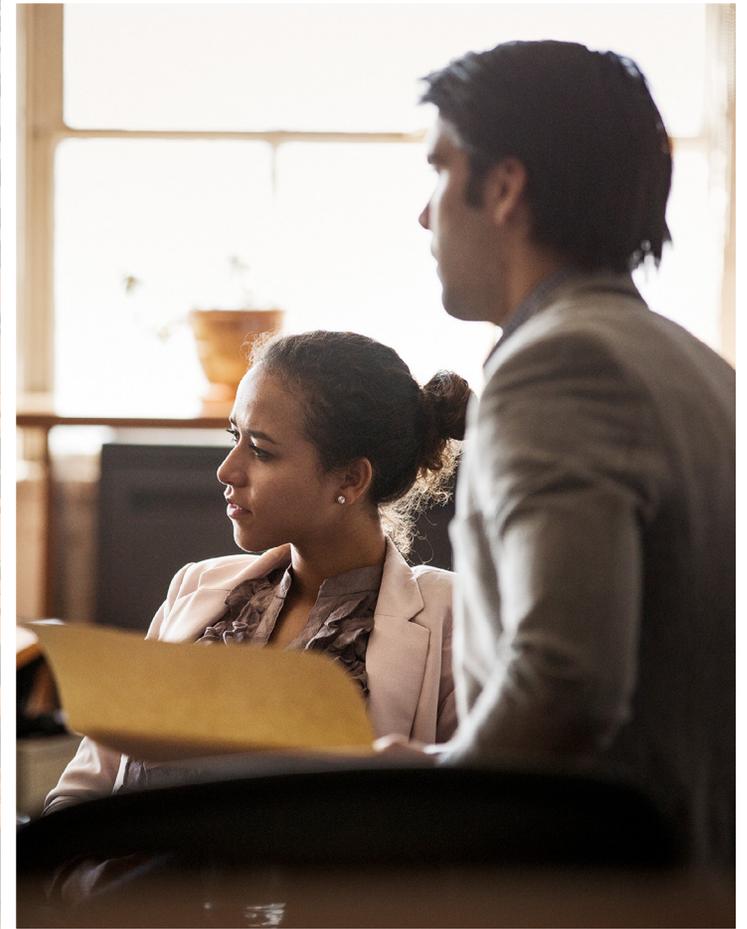


Challenge: Roles, marching orders, and objectives are always in flux.

Keeping up is difficult at best, especially with a large roster of contacts.

Solution: Staying on top of changes among your connections can provide opportunities for new connections, deeper engagements, and greater sales. **Machine learning and real-time alerts provide insights into what your connections are up to, and the best next actions to take on each of those insights at every opportunity to build relationships.**

There are dozens of small actions that open the door. When a contact has left a company, you have a chance to touch base and wish them luck, or ask about their new position. When you receive a response to a connection request or email, your reply keeps the lines of communication open. When you hear about an upcoming industry event or networking opportunity, you can reach out to those nearby.



Stage 3

Capitalize on opportunities
to convert



Capitalize on opportunities to convert

“It’s not about having the right opportunities. It’s about handling the opportunities right.”

—Mark Hunter, author and international keynote speaker

Customers come to you because they have a problem. You solve those problems. But what if you could anticipate and solve the problems they don’t yet realize they have? Relationship selling focuses on truly listening to your prospects and customers and recognizing opportunities.

The challenge at this stage is identifying those opportunities and knowing when you have the best odds of being heard.



Challenge: Understanding your buyers' pains, challenges, goals, and needs

You've undoubtedly heard the infamous statistic that claims the majority of buyers are nearly **70 percent** of the way to a buying decision before they engage a salesperson. It's a tough sell when your customers have already researched the competition and are on the tail-end of their purchase decision.

Solution: Contrary to popular belief, buyers don't want to do all the work themselves. Although it may be true that buyers are less likely to be dependent on sellers for all the information they need to make a decision, that doesn't mean they don't welcome your proprietary information and educated advice. Keep track of the type of content your connections share on LinkedIn, and the discussions they participate in. With unique insights around company growth, recent news articles, and trends, you'll be in a better position to understand each customer's current needs and mindset and where they are in the buying cycle.

Relationship selling focuses on the person, not the sale. Armed with this relevant data, you can address real customer concerns and offer recommendations and insights to begin building trust.

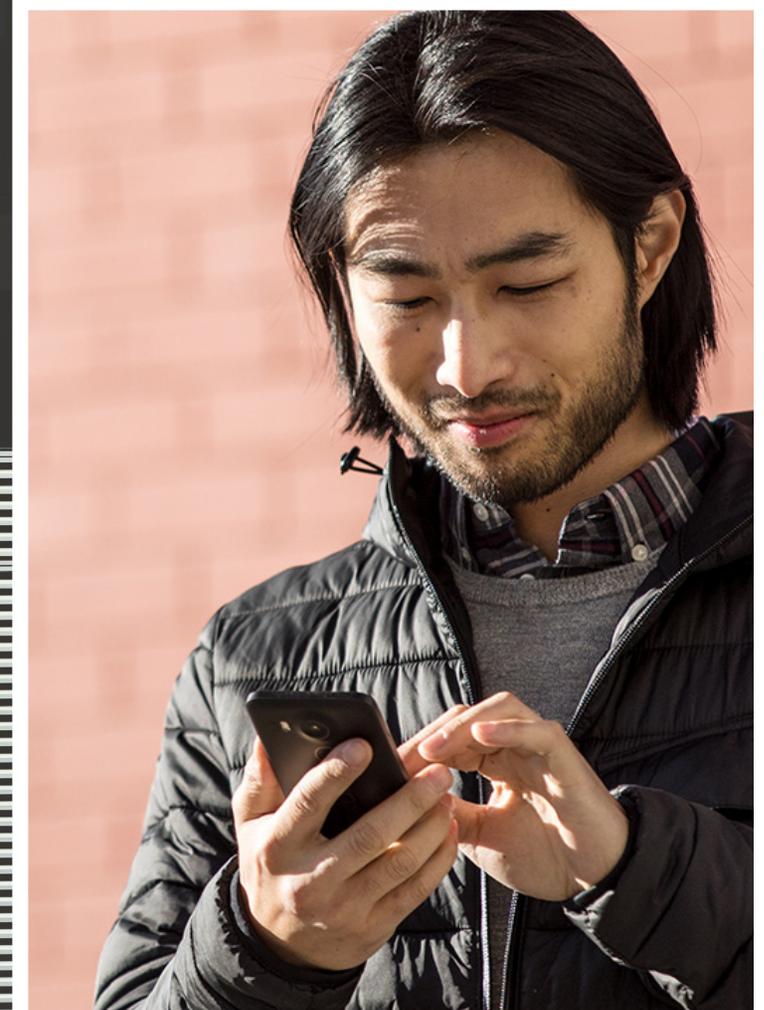


Challenge: Knowing when your connections are most receptive.

There will be times when buyers are just too focused on other objectives to listen. Bombarding them with information or requests will only serve to push them further away, weakening the relationship you've worked hard to build.

Solution: Evaluate each customer relationship. Build a health profile from data based on transactions, customer sentiment, emails and content exchanges, and frequency and level of customer interactions from CRM, email, and social networks. With predictive analytics, you can determine not only where new business opportunities lie, but you can also uncover potential risks for each account, like reaching out during a prospect's busiest week, so that you know which contacts to reach out to, and how. With a clear picture of each sales relationship, you can proactively focus on those who need your attention, and give space to those who don't.

Machine learning lets you know exactly when to re-engage an inactive buyer, or which customer emails are the most critical. Artificial intelligence (AI)-driven insights can deliver recommended next actions that enhance the experience for you and your customers.





Stage 4

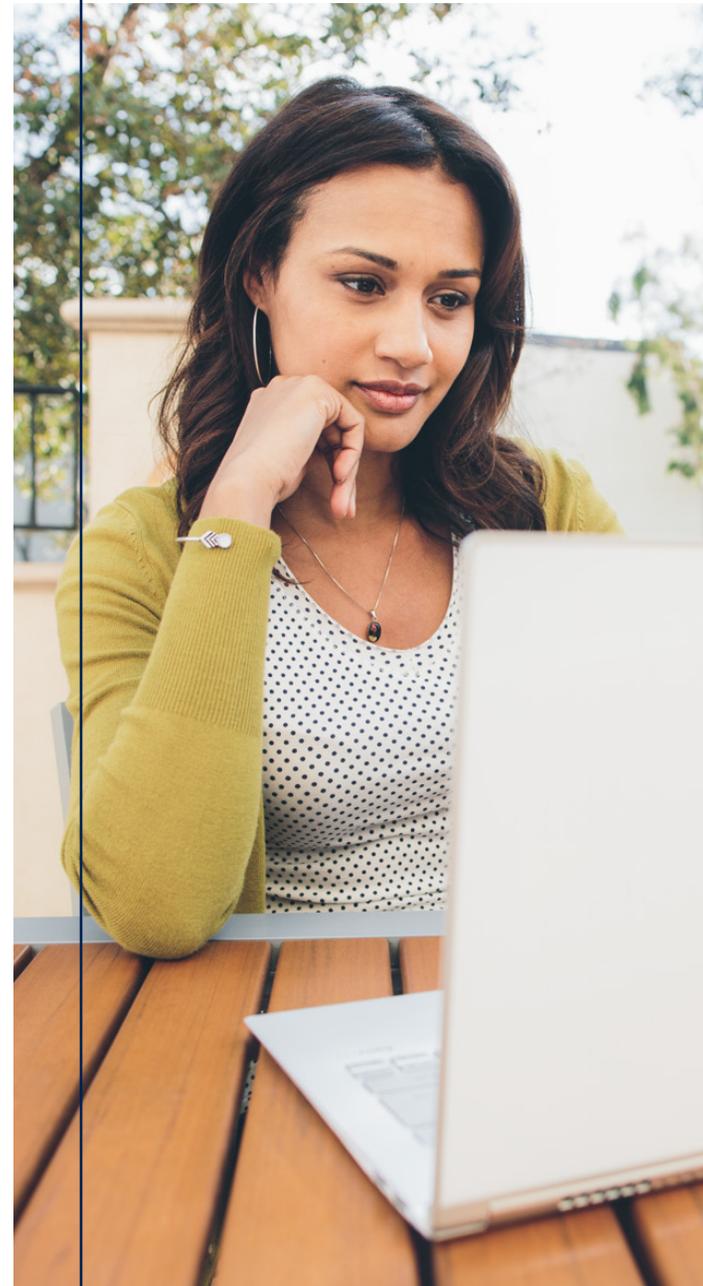
Deliver relationship
sales at scale

Deliver relationship sales at scale

“Human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and live richer lives.”

—Mark Hunter, author and international keynote speaker

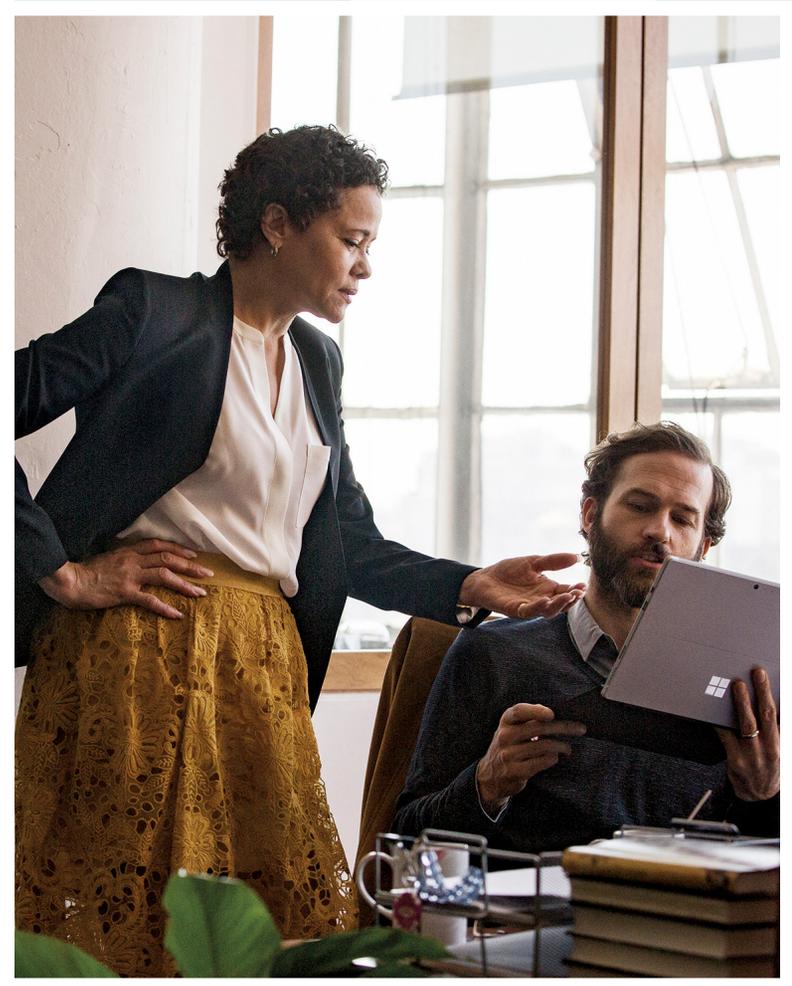
Meaningful relationships that stand the test of time are those that are continually nurtured. Nurturing a few relationships is manageable, but nurturing dozens is a more time-consuming proposition. Successfully finding and engaging with the right buyers is not enough. **It also needs to be sustainable and scalable, and that presents a few core challenges.**



Challenge: Engaging with dozens of stakeholders across the entire sales book

Especially when you're working with multiple companies, this can quickly become overwhelming.

Solution: Create and organize personalized content to share with your customers, so that you're ready to engage when they are. Imagine having data at your fingertips that tells you when someone interacts with the content, and when it's shared with other key decision makers, providing new leads to add to your book. With predictive intelligence and machine learning, you can. Take it a step further and track your customers' interests and activities to better anticipate the content that's most useful to them. Ramping up for exponential growth means using tools and techniques that make it possible to nurture every single sales relationship.



Challenge: Keeping up with vast amounts of data

The more accounts you have, the harder it is to sift through the noise. CRM tools, productivity software, and social media all provide data and insights that help build these relationships, but taken alone, they tell only part of the story. In fact, the data gleaned from one of these sources may lead to sellers making assumptions to fill in the blanks.

Solution: Prioritize tasks and engagement opportunities to keep tabs on—and grow—your customer relationships. Machine learning and analytics can provide valuable insights and drive actionable recommendations. Leverage insights from every available source for the knowledge you need to take action. Seamless CRM integration can help you more efficiently keep track of sales activity without removing the focus from those relationships.

With automation and a guided sales process, you can easily manage complex customer relationships and scale with ease, to close more deals, faster. A highly intuitive interface, productivity capabilities, robust mobile apps and familiar tools provide a connected experience that gets you up and running quickly.



Conclusion

The view's better from here: relationship selling powered by tech

Relationship selling works at every stage of the sales process from identifying key prospects to nurturing those leads, building relationships, and capitalizing on opportunities to convert to sales. And it can be done at scale, so that there are truly no limits to where your sales career can take you.

Let's take a look at an example of how relationship selling drives sales.

Tomas is a sales rep for a lawn care equipment manufacturer. His customers include retailers, dealers, and lawn care service providers in the Midwest. To reach his quarterly quota, Tomas needs one more large order. Rather than spending hours each day searching for the right leads online, Tomas uses the advanced search tool within LinkedIn to quickly locate Jamie, a valuable lead at a lawn care company in Kansas City. Rather than cold calling her, he receives a referral from a colleague who is connected with Jamie. And he relies on recommendations based on predictive analytics to determine the best time and day to reach out to her.

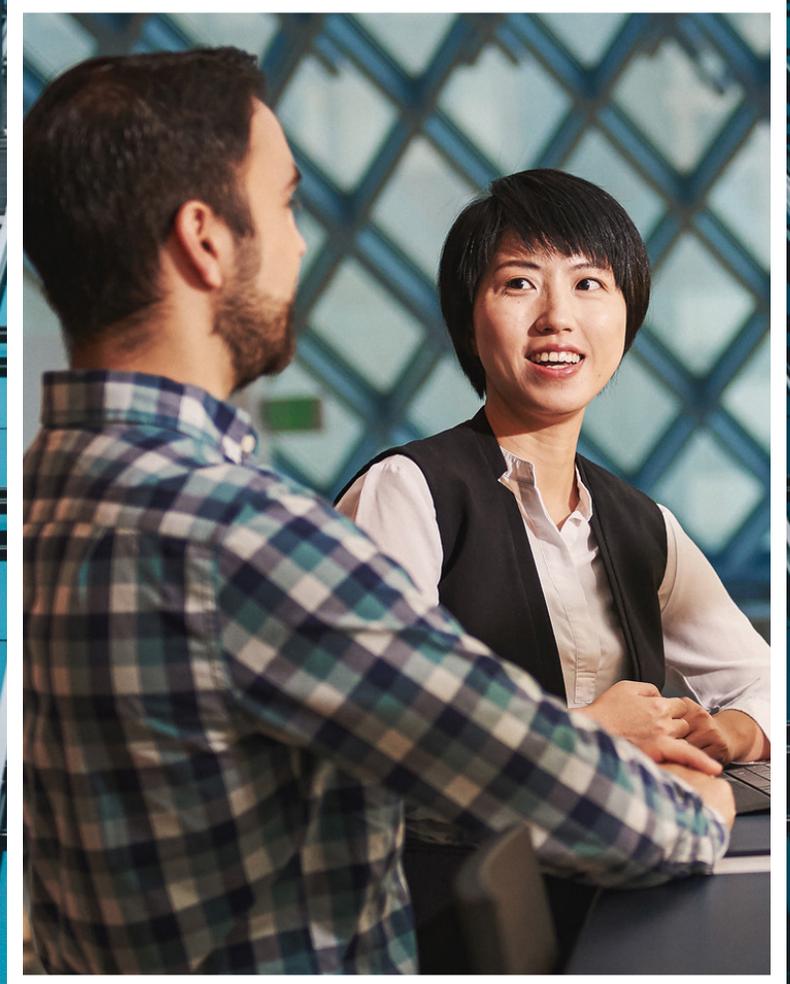
Once Tomas connects with Jamie, he receives insight about her key needs. As he builds a trusted relationship with her, predictive intelligence lets him know where he stands with the account so that he can choose the right moments to engage. And as Jamie's trust in Tomas and his company grows, she feels comfortable introducing Tomas to the other four contacts on her company's buying committee. He begins tracking each buyer throughout the lifecycle of the account to deliver relevant content that builds trust. **As Tomas continues to add connections and build relationships, a guided sales process helps him manage all of these complex relationships without losing productivity.**

Productivity software coupled with machine learning and predictive analytics tells an entire story that helps Tomas keep his relationship data in sync, and provides information that drives contextual learning and recommendations.

You already value the power of real relationships. When you combine that with modern technologies, you're able to create deeper, more meaningful relationships with your prospects and customers that build trust and increase sales.

Ready to catapult your sales career?
See how **Microsoft Dynamics
365 for Sales** can launch more
profitable relationships.

[Try it out](#)



1. https://www.slideshare.net/margaretlink/the-ultimate-guide-to-customer-loyalty-in-2017?qid=e7e8506b-32a3-4865-8ce1-ff4664e2f79d&v=&b=&from_search=2
2. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/press-room/2015/recommendations-from-friends-remain-most-credible-form-of-advertising.html>
3. <http://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/gartner-predicts-a-virtual-world-of-exponential-change/>
4. <https://business.linkedin.com/en-uk/marketing-solutions/blog/posts/B2B-Marketing/2016/making-sense-of-the-buyers-journey-stats>



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