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A L M A N A C

A FORECAST OF FUTURE SALES

Profiles  International
imagine great people®



“Times change. The farmer’s daughter now tells jokes about the traveling salesman.”

—CAREY WILLIAMS, FILMMAKER

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SALES

The use of currency (obsidian, a raw material) can be traced back 14,000 years. So it’s safe to assume, one day, a Sardinian woke up and decided he wanted to convince another Sardinian to give him more “money” for something he had, and thus selling was born. Three-thousand years later, give or take, raw materials gave way to minted coins, and the marketplace was open for business. Of course, things had to be brought and sold to the marketers, and the traveling salesman made his debut.

For the next several thousand years, not very much changed in the way of sales. In the early nineteenth century, almost every nation in the world had traveling peddlers and peddling networks. But according to Walter Friedman, author of “Birth of a Salesman,” “no nation developed organized sales forces to the same degree as the United States by the early twentieth century.”

America, for all intents and purposes, shaped the selling landscape, giving salespeople their distinct—if not at times unsavory—definition. This is because in the

nineteenth century, the scale of American manufacturing firms was massive, and their goods called for pushy, aggressive salesmanship, leading to global purchase. Companies such as GE, Pepsico, Carnegie Steel, and Wrigley's Chewing Gum developed sales techniques to keep up with the current science of mass production. This meant the salesman, who then was used to traveling, was now given planned routes to pre-evaluated customers within preordained territories. They learned how to answer specific questions about how a product would solve their clients' problems, offering them credit and making arrangements for delivery. Salesmen created demand.

By the 1920s, salesmanship was recognized as an essentially vital part of the modern economy, even giving rise to new areas of academic study and literature, and appearing in works by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain, and Herman Melville. In the early twentieth century, American salesmen shaped the United States and influenced the world.

One of the most influential men in this climate was John H. Patterson of National Cash Register. He carefully analyzed business processes and tried to perfect them, wrote skillfully-crafted sales scripts, drew up detailed maps of sales territories, and tested different methods of compensation. He also placed the pace of work under managerial control by demanding that salesmen meet monthly quotas, and believed he needed to break men down before rebuilding them as effective salesmen. Patterson promoted the idea that sales management should be handled systematically and scientifically.

Things didn't change much in the way of sales strategy in the twentieth century, but sales itself did not remain stagnant. In the 2000 U.S. census, 12 percent of the entire workforce were salespeople (up from 5 percent in 1920), and nearly half of them were women (up from a vast minority in 1920).

And now, with the emergence of technology, big data, and heretofore



“Sales are contingent upon the attitude of the salesman—not the attitude of the prospect.”

—W. CLEMENT STONE

unimagined connectivity, the role of the salesperson is changing more dramatically than it has in its 15,000 year history. Salespeople will need to know how to adapt, and sales managers will need to know which sales reps to hire and how to hire them for the future.

FUTURE TRENDS IN SALES

Gerhard Gschwandtner, founder and CEO of Selling Power, predicts that by 2020, 80 percent of B2B transactions will be automated, which means the number of sales jobs in the U.S. alone will shrink from its current 15.5 million to about 4.5 million. What's more, 60 percent of a buyer's decision is made online, so their mind is more or less already made up before they begin to talk to a salesperson. Consumers are fundamentally better informed and empowered. People don't walk into a store to buy something uninformed and at the mercy of the first salesperson that sees them anymore. Consumers are savvy—they've done their research, talked it over with trusted friends and family, compared products between different suppliers, and found product reviews on social media.

According to Brian Fetherstonhaugh, chairman and CEO of OgilvyOne, "In the

old world so many people grew up driving consumers through the sales funnel. Now the sales funnel was actually invented in 1898, so it's had a very good run, but this notion of the marketer or seller driving people through the selling funnel is just not relevant anymore. The empowered and informed consumer has got their own journey, and your job as a salesperson is to meet them on their journey and propel them and work with them towards a final sale. It's a very different beast."

That doesn't mean, however, that the death of the salesman has arrived—it just means salespeople don't hold all the cards like they used to. Their role has simply changed. Their task is that of a consultant. The job of the salesperson is to understand how their product or service fits with the needs of an educated buyer. If the buyer is on a journey, the seller must meet them in the middle and guide them the rest of the way as an advisor.

This is a good step forward. With more product and company transparency, prospective buyers can be more inclined to trust salespeople. Gone are the days of the snake-oil salesman, but with them are fading their connotations and assumptions. In his poem "John Brown's Body," Stephen Vincent Benet writes of salespeople:

*Horsedealers, draft-evaders, gipsymen;
Crooked creatures of a thousand dubious
trades,
That breed like gnats from the débris of
war;
Half-cracked herb-doctor, patent-
medicine man,
With his accordeon and his inked silk hat;
Sellers of snake-oil balm and lucky rings.*

In “The Iceman Cometh,” one salesman suggests of another, “[he’s] standing on a street corner in hell right now, making suckers of the damned, telling them there’s nothing like snake oil for a bad burn.” These are unfair biases, of course, but years of fast-talk and products that don’t stand up to their advertised effectiveness have left a bad taste in the mouths of the general population about salespeople. The shady illusion of a slippery salesperson has been deeply ingrained in the consumer’s mind, but those images are being erased as the salesman becomes more friend than necessary evil. People are seeking sales representatives for help and advice, not being approached as

if they were prey. With the onset of social media, salespeople are being invited into the buying process much later, as opposed to providing only the information they want to provide—the takeaway here is that salespeople are being invited.

Knowing how the landscape is changing, and looking forward toward future trends, is the best way for salespeople and their managers to stay not only relevant, but vital to the economy. According to the [Institute for Global Futures](#), these are the top 11 trends salespeople should keep an eye on:

1. Customer relationship management systems must have a human touch to be fully effective, or they will turn customers off.
2. Data warehouses and data mining will be essential to creating the real-time enterprise to access information and identify key customer opportunities.
3. Understanding who the highest profile customers are—and who are the least profitable—should guide the sales process.



“The salesman knows nothing of what he is selling, save that he is charging a great deal too much for it.”

—OSCAR WILDE

4. Sales knowledge management—getting the right information to the right people at the right time so they can make the right buying decision—will be mission-critical to sales.
5. Business intelligence—about competitors, markets, and customers—will enable businesses to strategically plan better, identify new opportunities, and adapt quickly.
6. Wireless access to remote product knowledge on-demand will differentiate salespeople who need to “get back to you tomorrow.”
7. Real-time knowledge about products and services—and providing that on-demand to customers over electronic personalized networks—will be a key sales weapon of the 21st century.
8. Sales business process transformation—where organizations rethink and change the sales process to maximize effectiveness and innovations—will be vital.
9. The capture of all customer data around behavior, purchasing, preferences, and profiles from all customer touch points will provide the holistic sales view that every organization must have access to.
10. The sales supply chain, from producer to end-user, will become

increasingly web-centric, and end-to-end streamlined; linking all transactions, payments, logistics, shipping, and production in one super-efficient transparent network.

11. Needless to say, sales managers will need to find the absolute right salespeople to fit this changing climate.

HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY FOR SALES SUCCESS

The biggest thing salespeople will need to do to overcome the hurdles of a changing sales climate is to incorporate more technology in their strategy. LinkedIn, for example, has several features salespeople can use to generate leads, especially in B2B sales. [HubSpot](#) offers these tips to best utilize [LinkedIn](#):

- Explore who your contacts know, and ask for introductions to people who fit your target audience.
- Reach out directly to 2nd- and 3rd-level contacts, referencing the 1st-level contact you have in common.
- Join groups where your target audience hangs out, answering questions, and contacting people who have issues with which you can help.
- Reach out to members who have recently viewed your profile, and

80

percentage of B2B sales transactions expected to be automated by the year 2020

11

number of U.S. sales jobs—in millions—expected to be lost by the year 2020

—SOURCE: SELLING POWER

ask how they found you and what interested them about your profile.

- Congratulate 1st-level contacts who have updated their profiles—especially if they’ve changed jobs and/or companies—to learn about new opportunities for doing business together.
- Post links to your articles, blogs, events, and lead generating offers to drive site traffic and generate leads.

Another useful source of leads is the social networks that go overlooked. One example would be Reachable.com, which can introduce salespeople to others who may be interested in their business. If there is a specific client you would like to reach, Reachable will map out your network, showing connections that you and the prospective client may have in common. It’s kind of like the “Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon” game, but for sales. Remember, too, that blogging isn’t just for marketers or writers. [Blogger](http://Blogger.com) or [WordPress](http://WordPress.com) are good places to start. LinkedIn, too, now has a blogging feature. If salespeople start

managing their own blogs, it will grow credibility with prospective customers. It can differentiate you from other salespeople who spend all of their time chasing leads, as opposed to providing educational advice and consultation. As an added bonus, keeping up a blog can help generate leads and boost your visibility, giving you a greater presence online. With a blog, salespeople can also track prospect engagement by using email attachments. Once a personal page is created, including a link in emails can track what prospects are viewing, reading, and interacting with.

TRIED AND TRUE TRAITS OF SUCCESSFUL SALESPEOPLE

In addition to utilizing extrinsic sources such as new technology, salespeople need to remember that their intrinsic qualities are just as important, and are things that, no matter what, will never change in effectively selling a product.

One of the most important traits is empathy. Salespeople need to be able to

genuinely feel for what the customer needs, and sincerely want to help them solve their problems. If a salesperson is only interested in the upsell, and not in addressing the client's need, the customer may seek help elsewhere, or not return to the business. To be effective in sales, one must be able to empathize and understand the client. With empathy, you'll be able to ask better questions, getting to the root of the problem more quickly.

More than empathy, honesty should be the trademark of any salesperson. If a salesperson is honest with their client, the client will take note, and more likely trust the advice the salesperson gives. Remember, in this new age of sales, counsel and advice are the most important duties of a salesperson. Without honesty there can be no trust, and without trust, what good is advice? Clients want to know you're really on their side and looking out for their best interest. After all, as a salesperson, you should be.

Ego is something typically inherent in salespeople, and it is a crucial personality trait when it comes to sales success. Ego-drive is the need to be validated by others, and a successful salesperson will never be satisfied until he or she is awarded with success. There's a deep-seated need to be victorious in closing a sale they are

emotionally tied to. Because most prospects end up saying "no," a salesperson's ego needs to be resilient—taking rejection personally will demoralize an otherwise successful salesperson.

Managing and maintaining these three characteristics will boost sales success. Throw in product knowledge and the odds of success go through the roof. Learn as much about the product you're promoting as possible, and go further by researching your competitors' offerings. Know your product as if it was your baby, and treat it as such. Believe that your product is the answer to all the world's problems, and be ready with an honest answer for whatever wild question may be thrown your way.

HIRING A SALES TEAM FOR THE FUTURE

The first step in hiring the right sales rep or team for the future is to consider the profile of the salesperson. This is especially important in the recruiting phase. These days, sales style and approach are more important than ever, and that approach needs to be one of self-starting. Salespeople will have to take ownership and responsibility of their work, constantly self-developing and learning to stay up-to-date. It will be the salesperson's duty to bring

the product, brand, or service to life in a very human way, and their personality will be the key in doing this.

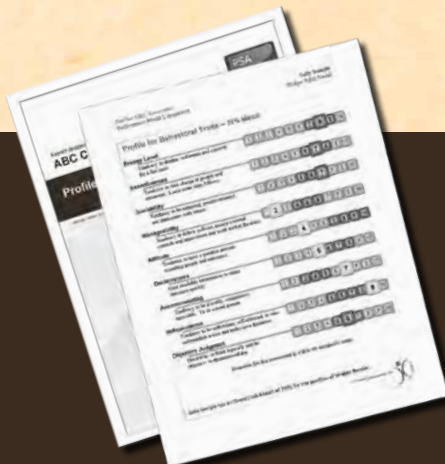
Talent management solutions like the Profiles Sales Assessment™ (PSA) draw upon data derived from the top-performing salespeople in specific sales jobs in an organization. The PSA is used primarily for selecting, onboarding, and managing salespeople and account managers. The “job modeling” feature is unique, and can be customized by company, sales position, department, manager, or any combination of these factors. These can help:

- Evaluate an individual based on the qualities required to perform successfully.
- Predict on-the-job performance in seven critical sales behaviors: prospecting, call reluctance, closing the sale, self-starting, working with a team, building and maintaining relationships, and compensation preference.

By using assessments, sales managers can evaluate and determine the profile of their prospective sales candidates.

When hiring a team, sales managers will need to select people who can work well together, even if they are in different departments. They need to commit to working together to provide a seamless service for their clients. After all, customer service is a major component of sales effectiveness. No matter who the consumer interacts with, he or she needs to receive the same quality of service every time. For example, Audi's flagship dealership in London used a customer service representative to greet customers, thus losing the sales-pitchy feel. In reality, salespeople need to be adept at customer service.

Hiring managers should consider an assessment such as the Customer Service Profile™ to measure how well a person fits specific customer service jobs in an organization. This particular employee



The Profiles Sales Assessment™ draws upon data derived from the top-performing salespeople in specific sales jobs in an organization.

assessment is based on various characteristics identified through Profiles International's carefully compiled research. It includes a customer service skills test and customer representative assessment. You can also select vertical-specific versions available in hospitality, healthcare, financial services, and retail.

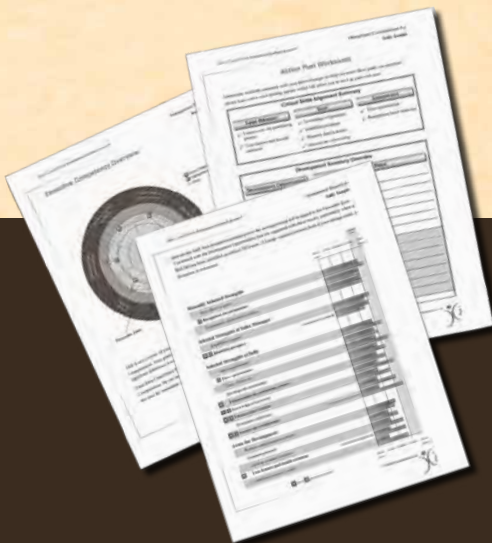
Sales managers need to remember that, just as salespeople need to be constantly developing themselves and becoming a more trusted source of counseling for the client, they too need to give adequate time to mentoring and coaching their employees. A sales manager's duties may be broadened to help in the team's networking, to facilitate communications, curate information, and optimize training.

The Profiles Sales CheckPoint™ specifically provides useful information to support better coaching and

communication, leading to higher salesperson productivity and satisfaction, and lower turnover. Its 180-degree feedback system helps sales managers evaluate salespeople, pinpoint their development needs, and align priorities in order to improve performance by:

- Supporting better coaching and communication.
- Improving salesperson productivity and satisfaction.
- Reducing turnover.

The future role of the salesperson will be primarily pulling through and finalizing the sale, providing value-added services, and advising and consulting, all while providing a personable, human touch. Sales managers will need to assemble the best sales team in order to meet these necessities, and salespeople will need to constantly adapt.



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IN CONCLUSION

With technology rapidly changing and carving the sales landscape, it's easy to wonder about the future of salespeople. It can be worrisome, wondering if the job will one day become obsolete. The fact is, now more than ever, salespeople provide a crucial service to individuals seeking a solution to their needs.

The old-world connotations of snake oil peddlers are gone, making room for the new profile of the trustworthy salesman. The very technology that made some salespeople

nervously fidget is now making their jobs more efficient, with transparency and accessible information drawing clients to those who can honestly fill their needs.

Arthur Miller's Willy Loman is dead, and in his place stands the noble salesperson: one of integrity, honesty, and knowledge. Salespeople need to keep their eyes on changing trends, and sales managers need to do the same in order to assemble a team that can keep up with the times. Most importantly, salespeople need to be people-centric, because in the end, sales is people.

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