3 Ways Salespeople Can Use Content to Close Sales Faster

Ushering your sales team into the Information Age.

"Why pound a nail into a board with a hammer when you've got a perfectly good fist?"

That scenario sounds ludicrous, I know, but it happens –at least in spirit—everyday in the realm of sales. Salespeople, adhering to those archaic old 20th Century tricks of the trade, often turn a blind eye toward the modern-day marketing tools at their fingertips, and it's costing them and, perhaps, *your* company untold revenue.

Content marketing, in particular, has been slow to be adopted by the general salesforce, despite the unprecedented acknowledgment of its effectiveness in the business world. Why? Perhaps many sales professionals view it as something that's outside their realm, strictly a marketing or advertising initiative that has little to do with them or their efforts. And, of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Well, it's time for managers and supervisors to take heed and coax their reluctant sales teams into the Information Age for both fun and profit. But especially profit.

Approach #1 – Countering Prospects' Objections

At your next weekly sales meeting, ask your team to share the most common rejections or objections they've been receiving from the prospects with whom they've been communicating. Ultimately, you can address them all, of course, but for the purpose of this exercise, try and focus on just a few of the issues—preferably ones that multiple members of your team have in common.

Now have your content marketing guru create a few pieces of content that addresses these issues. The content can be in the form of blog posts, video posts, expanded content—whatever is most appropriate in your situation. The content should be serialized in progressive fashion as its ultimate mission is to help lead your prospects through the Sales Funnel.

If calls-to-action on your website haven't captured a particular prospect's contact info, and your salesperson has initiated a conversation through other means, have them share this content directly with the prospect, and have them see how often this results in, at least, a further chance for dialogue.

Approach #2 – Keeping in Touch via Content Sharing

In the realm of B2B Sales, where the scale of decisions is typically significant for the purchasing enterprise, decision-makers tend to be more thorough and nuanced than impulsive. Once a dialogue has been established, your sales professional should be maintaining regular contact, and sharing valuable content with some periodic frequency.

Ideally, in a world of perfect Sales & Marketing alignment, your teams will be monitoring and managing this process of gradually leading prospects through the Sales Funnel via your website and its back-end capabilities for tracking customer behavior. But in the case of prospects with whom your salespeople are interacting outside that realm, especially those communications that have been largely telephonic or email-based, have them gradually ramp up the dialogue by punctuating the conversation with increasingly targeted pieces of content. While sharing blog posts may certainly remain relevant, start sharing more extensive, authoritative resources such as white papers, case studies and primary research.

Approach #3 – Sales Input in Content Direction

If you've engaged your sales team in the previous two steps over a credible amount of time, they will have witnessed some results –perhaps small, perhaps significant—but by this juncture, there should be some general acknowledgment that strategic content has expanded their ability to communicate with prospects.

So as a new component of your account strategy meetings, start asking your salesforce what type of content *they* think would help them over some particular client hurdles. Have your content marketing gurus really *listen* to these requests and begin generating material that will specifically address these needs and issues. And keep in mind that occasionally generating a client-specific document or other initiative is a small price to pay for a significant new account. Once this process becomes standard operating procedure, you will not only start witnessing increased sales, you will have executed one of those rare business Holy Grail-level achievements—true Sales & Marketing alignment.

One last thought, among the many prospects and current customers on the mailing list to receive the emails touting your blog posts and premium content, make certain that your sales team members are signed-up, too. It'll prevent you from having to nudge them to stay current on your marketing content, and it will serve as a subtle reminder to share it with their customers. After a few big "wins," we suspect that they'll end up being big fans of the concept. Especially on payday.