

10 Skills that will help you be successful in sales in near future



By 2030, according to the recent McKinsey Global Institute report, [Jobs lost, jobs gained: Workforce transitions in a time of automation](#), as many as 375 million workers—or roughly 14 percent of the global workforce—may need to switch occupational categories as digitization, automation, and advances in artificial intelligence disrupt the world of work.

On the technology side, companies like TCS, Infosys, Accenture, PwC, etc. have joined a global drive by World Economic Forum through its [portal SkillSET](#), for tech reskilling of 1 million workers by 2021 in the first ever such IT industry initiative to meet the global skills gap challenge and address job displacement arising from automation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

While the focus on technology role reskilling is the talk of the town, sales as a career is also undergoing drastic changes. A 2017 report by Forrester, discusses the large-scale displacement of B2B sales reps by 2020, triggered by the powerful combination of empowered customers and digital technologies. Today, 68% of B2B buyers prefer doing business online versus with a salesperson, and when they engage with sales, they want that experience to be in a more problem-solving, consultative manner.

Forrester predicts that 1 million sales reps will be displaced by 2020.

But the best salespeople will always be looking at ways to enhance their skills and achieve greater things.

So what are skills you need as B2B sales reps to be successful? Working with hundreds of sales reps, sales leaders and buyers, here is our shortlist of top 10 skills that you need to have all your bases covered for future. This is beyond your basic skills to build relationships, qualifying, closing, objection handling, etc.

1. Unlearning & Learning

The buyers are changing and if sales reps don't let go of their past learning's they can't learn new things and adapt to the new reality. Unlearning has actually become more important than learning. Try new things out of your comfort zone, do something against your nature and what you believed to be true and come to terms with the new reality.

2. Complex Problem solving

Businesses are becoming more and more complex with the onslaught of data and a plethora of information sources available. B2B sales would require sales reps with strong problem-solving skills. The skill requires problem definition; creativity to come up with alternative solutions, and strong decision-making skills to chose the right option and implement the solution.

3. Judgment

Sales is a mix of Art and Science. While the science of sales can be taught it is the art of selling which separates superstars from average performers. One of the key skills which set star performers apart is their ability to make sound judgment in the heat of a situation, whether in front of the client, handling objections, understanding body language, etc. or communication to follow a meeting.

4. Influencing

Influencing is not only about negotiation or a commercial decision but about influencing internal or external stakeholders to get what you want. Influencing also means how you barter resources and ask for something in return when you are delivering value. Influencing also means having greater control over the sales and value delivery process.

5. Prioritization & Focus

Time management is one of the most important ingredients for sales reps and this is something most of them are struggling with. A study by Forbes, [Why Sales Reps Spend Less Than 36% Of Time Selling](#) suggests, nearly two-thirds (64.8%) of reps' time, on average, is spent in non-revenue-generating activities, leaving only 35.2% for functions related to selling. But only 22% of respondents use any kind of time management methodology. As the usage and penetration of tools increases, there would be a growing demand between their selling time and other internal activities, sales reps with good time management skills and prioritization would win the day.

6. Research Skills

Research skills have moved beyond the traditional pre-call preparation skills or doing your homework before any meeting to being able to identify the trigger events and pre-empting the client situations even before they are aware of it.

Developing acumen to challenge and prescribe to the clients about their needs requires deep research skills to build your insight system.

7. Business Acumen

The businesses, their market ecosystems, roles, etc. are becoming more complex and the digital transformation and entry of new competitor's or redrawing of industry boundaries is the order of the day. Sales reps who will succeed in this space are the ones who can understand the market, competitive, technology landscape and how their solutions can impact the outcomes. A deep understanding of the drivers, implications, and outcomes for their customers would win the day for them.

8. Articulation of value proposition

No one buys any product or solution for the features but for the value, it provides to them and the organization. Many salespeople fall into the trap of talking about their features compared to their competitors but they fail to answer the basic question as to why should it matter to the customer. The star sales rep is not only always able to articulate why investing in a solution would help solve customer's mission-critical priorities but also how would it impact the decision-maker personally. The articulation is more often than is quantifiable and can be measured against the investments required. Sales reps with the ability to articulate value would be able to differentiate themselves and can even earn a premium.

9. Digital Selling

As per a study by CEB, "57% of the purchase decision is complete before a customer even calls a supplier". Digital selling skills are a becoming a norm to stay and thrive in a digitally driven sales environment.

Investing in digital/social skills as a sales rep matters a lot in today's connected world. From identifying prospects to reaching out to them or identifying triggers every aspect of B2B buying has changed. Sales reps who take are taking advantage of what is available to them digitally in order to provide a better customer buying experience and engagement would be the ones winning business in future.

10. Consensus Building

As per a study on an average, there are 6.8 people getting involved in any B2B decision making. More and more deals now need consensus building before the deals are done. Because the pay off for buying a complex solution is so long away and so uncertain that even senior executives with economic decision-making powers are unwilling to take large decisions without the team's buy-in.

This has huge implications for the sales reps and time to close as well as risk goes up with every new addition to the decision-making team.

Take a look at this list in its entirety, and it's clear that if you want to prepare for future success you should develop your skills to analyze, solve problems, articulate and influence. Substantially.

Identify the skills that will yield maximum returns to you and prioritize them. Doing by yourself, the list would seem daunting but invest in tools and technologies to make it easy for you. If you need more advice in terms of how to build these skills for your team, reach out to us.

For other great posts like these follow our LinkedIn page <https://www.linkedin.com/company/saleszee/> or visit our website www.saleszee.com .