7 Tools for a More Effective Sales Team
Who Is This Guide For?

This guide is for any business owner or sales manager who would like to improve the effectiveness of their sales team.
About This Guide

Over the past 10 years, buyer behavior has changed dramatically. Have the practices of your sales team changed as well?

Consider this: Many of the customers you currently serve – maybe even most of them – began their buying process by researching your company and its offerings online. Consumers today are increasingly using search engines to find original content about the things you’re selling. They’re also using social media to gather buying recommendations from their friends, family and peers. And they’re reading reviews of your competitors’ businesses online.

In fact, it’s estimated that by the year 2020, a full 80% of the average consumer’s buying process will occur online, without any human-to-human interaction.
If you’re in the business of selling a product or service, it’s crucial to understand that the salesperson’s role as an information disseminator has evaporated, along with their advantage in the sales negotiation process. The bottom line is that to be successful in our newly connected world, your sales process has to change.

**To begin with, you need to transform your sales team into an integrated sales and marketing team.**

- Your team needs to extend well beyond the negotiation and contracting process, and into the research and consideration process of your potential customers.

- You need to shift your resources toward the space where your customers are spending the majority of their research and purchasing time online.
# Table of Contents

**Introduction:** The New Revolution in Selling ................................................................. 6

**Tool 1:** An Effective Customer Relationship Management System ................................ 8

**Tool 2:** Email Tracking Applications .................................................................................. 12

**Tool 3:** Premium LinkedIn Accounts ................................................................................... 14

**Tool 4:** An Integrated Marketing Tool .................................................................................. 16

**Tool 5:** Computer Tablets .................................................................................................. 18

**Tool 6:** Lead-Generating Content Marketing ...................................................................... 20

**Tool 7:** Personalized Marketing Tools .................................................................................. 23
Customers today have access to so much instant information online that by the time they engage vendors, as much as 80% of their buying journey is already complete.

*Introduction: The New Revolution in Selling*

From the late 1970s through the early 2000s, not much changed in the world of sales methodologies. Sellers could employ a consultative sales approach, apply it well, and consistently produce excellent results. But not anymore.

Driven by the Internet, the commoditization of many products and services, the aftermath of the Great Recession, and the radical intensification of competition in many industries, buying has changed.
It’s important to understand that marketers and salespeople are no longer the gatekeepers of information that they once were. The endless amounts of information available on the Internet and through social media channels have changed all that.

With access to unlimited information, the prospect now has all the power in the sales process. And so it shouldn’t come as a surprise that standard solution and consultation style sales concepts aren’t working as they once did.

We’ve identified seven must-have sales tools that will help your reps sell more efficiently, without adding extra weight to their already busy workdays.
Tool 1: An Effective Customer Relationship Management System

According to a Harvard Business Review study, 71% of qualified leads are never followed up on.

Regardless of the size of your company or the current shape of your sales team, choosing a new CRM (customer relationship management) system is a major decision. Many of the most frequently used CRMs will increase your sales team’s workload, which in turn will cause you to lose sales and expend unnecessary resources.

The right CRM, however, will be easily adopted by your group, and will provide your sales team with the ability to turn prospects into qualified leads, helping you achieve your targets for growth.

Managers and executives have a number of CRM choices available to them today. Here are a few points to consider:

The Shift Away from Data Entry

Data entry is a major focus within many CRM systems, which often require near-constant updates and attention by your sales staff in order to remain viably useful. Consider implementing a CRM that is integrated with a platform that captures every instance of communication a salesperson might have with a customer. That will eliminate the need for your team to input all its interaction points. In fact, we’ve found that with certain CMS systems there’s no need for a sales team to manually enter data at all.
Social Media Publishing

• Not only do daily posts on industry-relevant social media channels bring visitors to your web presence – they also expand your overall visitor reach.

Inbound Publishing

• Before you can turn online leads into closed deals, you need to be looked upon as a thought leader in your industry. Perhaps surprisingly, that’s not as difficult as it sounds. We produce articles, blog posts, white papers, ebooks and more, in which your company is viewed as an indisputable industry expert.

• Some of this credibility-enhancing content is published in places where your target buyers are likely to find it. Some of it is offered on your own website as an instant download or free giveaway to customers who are willing to share their contact details.

Paid Media

• Also known as “paid search marketing” or “pay-per-click,” this is simply one further option for getting your business and its message noticed online, no matter where your potential customers are spending their time. These paid promotions will significantly increase your brand recognition, and will ultimately drive visitors to your website.
A Fully Integrated Platform Means More Information

Choose a CRM platform that is fully integrated with your email inbox and your telephone call log. The process of connecting with leads becomes simple and smart.

With a fully integrated CRM, salespeople can view any aspect of a dialogue that has already occurred with a particular customer. They can see the content that customer has already consumed, and they can see where that potential customer is in the decision-making process. This gives your team the unique opportunity of identifying which interactions have made a difference for each customer, and which haven’t.

According to a recent Harvard Business Review study, 71% of qualified leads are never followed up with. Those leads that are followed up are only touched an average of 1.3 times. Clearly, these are tremendous opportunities lost. An automated and integrated CRM is a tool that can quickly and easily reverse that trend for your sales team.
You may be wondering which CRM system is used at IQnection.

After an extensive research phase, we selected HubSpot.

We chose HubSpot because it is a CRM and marketing platform rolled into one. Our marketing team uses it to keep a large number of prospects interested in our services, and our sales team tracks and manages all their interactions with our online materials. HubSpot allows us to guide prospects to the information that matters to them most.

Empower your team and streamline the customer experience by giving both your sales and marketing teams easy access to one another’s data.
Tool 2: Email Tracking Applications

The practice of email tracking, which can reveal the exact time and date an email was opened or clicked, may seem unconventional to executives who haven't yet been made familiar with its benefits. But when considered in a traditional business context, it’s easy to understand just how helpful an email tracking tool can be to a company’s sales force.

Consider, for instance, the email communication process of a typical sales rep: He send an email to a prospect, but then has no way to gauge that prospect’s interest level. In fact, he often doesn’t know when, or if, his email was opened or read.

In sales, knowing when someone opens or clicks links in your email is critical information for understanding prospect engagement. Not only does the email tracking process save sales reps valuable time – it also allows them to engage in exactly the right way. And that can make all the difference in a selling situation.
Here’s why email tracking notifications are important:

Email Opens: A notification telling you that a prospect has opened your email doesn’t tell you much, aside from the fact that your email has been noticed. But once you begin seeing the same email opened multiple times, you’ll have a very good indication of how interested a prospect is in your business.

Email Clicks: If the sales team is including links to valuable information in its email outreach, understanding how prospects are engaging with those links is critical. While an open symbolizes an email being accurately delivered, a click shows a real interest in what you have to say, or in the offer you’re making.

The email tracking software you team uses should show a prospect’s professional history, mutual contacts and more, right in your inbox. It should also tell you when, how many times, where, and from what device your email was opened. Email scheduling, which allows emails to be written now but sent in the future, is also an important feature.
Tool 3: Premium LinkedIn Accounts

Many companies subsidize Premium LinkedIn Accounts for their sales reps. If that’s not something your company is already doing, identify one or two reps willing to take the LinkedIn Sales Navigator plan for a free 30-day trial. The plan gives targeted lead recommendations, and even includes its own LinkedIn-specific CRM system, which is known as Lead Builder.

The social networking site’s Sales Navigator is enhanced and customized specifically for sales professionals. Users receive real-time sales intelligence and insights on the accounts and prospects they’re most interested in, and can even send emails directly to decision makers through the site’s InMail platform, even if they’re not connected to them on LinkedIn.

Many of today’s top sales professionals consider InMail one of the quickest and easiest ways to bypass a top executive’s gatekeeper. And according to LinkedIn, an InMail is 30 times more likely to get a response than a cold call.

LinkedIn is also known for its highly relevant search facility, which allows users to find prospects by title, company, location or keyword. With a paid Sales Navigator plan, it’s possible to search by company size and seniority level as well.
Finally, knowing which visitors are viewing your profile can be one of the most valuable benefits of a paid LinkedIn account. A free account shows you some of the LinkedIn members who’ve recently clicked your profile, but that number is limited. With a Sales Navigator account, reps will have full access to an enhanced look at every person who has viewed their profile in the past 90 days. It’s easy enough to deduce just how valuable that benefit alone could be to an especially proactive rep.
Tool 4: An Integrated Marketing Tool

Imagine if there was a way to track every movement taken on your website by every visitor who landed on it. Imagine if you could see which pages each person visited, and what actions they took on each page: how long they spent reading a particular blog article, the various guides and whitepapers they downloaded, the videos they watched.

Now imagine you had their name and email address — the ability to follow up. Wouldn’t that sort of information be incredibly valuable data for your sales team to be armed with?

With integrated marketing platform automation software, tracking and documenting even the most detailed aspects of the activities undertaken by visitors to your website is a reality. With your integrated dashboard, you’ll be able to see when a prospect visits your site, and when she responds to a call-to-action by downloading a specific piece of content or taking a certain action.

Interconnected tools will allow you to access real-time marketing data, which in turn allows you to offer contextual marketing experiences to every contact in your database.

When a warm lead visits a certain section of your site over and over again, for instance, your sales reps can respond contextually and appropriately — there’s no guess work involved. And when a customer who has gone through your sales pipeline visits your site after leaving a pitch meeting, not only will your reps will have a better understanding of that customer’s interest level — they’ll also have more insight into his or her major sticking points.
Here are a few ways integrated marketing automation software can help align the goals of your sales team:

• **Goal-Setting Is Built In:** Your program is built around your marketing goals. You’ll receive regular email summaries reporting on the performance of your site and your team. You’ll have access to information that lets you know which goals are being met, and which are being missed.

• **Your Website Is Personalized:** By using smart content and smart calls-to-action on your website and your landing pages, you’ll be able to show targeted messaging to your prospects based on the content they’ve already shown an interest in.

• **Real-Time Analytics Lead to Growth:** Along with the growth to your sales pipeline and your market presence, the analytics available in your integrated marketing platform will allow both your marketing and sales teams to understand what’s working, and to adjust tactics accordingly.
Tool 5: Computer Tablets

According to analysts at the technology research firm Gartner, 195 million tablets were sold worldwide in 2013. Forrester Research predicts that consumers will buy 375 million tablets in 2016. Is it time for your sales team to get on board?

If you’ve been on the receiving end of a sales presentation lately, there’s a strong chance an iPad or some other form of digital tablet was pulled out at some point during the meeting.

There’s a good reason for that: We know that interactive and visually oriented presentations hold attention spans longer.
Here’s why tablet computers are the ideal selling solution:

The Interactivity: It’s much easier — and maybe even more natural — for a prospect to scroll, click and flip through the documents on your tablet than to shift through your paper-based marketing materials.

The Positive Impression: It’s true that delivering a sales presentation with brochures, catalogs and random pieces of paper gives off an old-fashioned vibe in today’s technology-focused world. When a direct sales rep shows up at a meeting with a confident demeanor and a digital tablet, he comes across as a professional who’s in control.

The Rich Content Possibilities: Beginning or ending a slide deck with brief videos makes your presentation more engaging. With a tablet, a sales rep can hammer a point home with an audio clip, a YouTube video or nearly any other sort of media experience.
According to the Sales Management Association, 59% of sales organizations have a company-sponsored initiative to assess and deploy tablets for their sales force. Another 31% are considering one. Only 10% say they have no interest.

And Forrester Research Inc., which recently released a report on the value that tablet-empowered salespeople can bring to a business, is predicting that consumers will buy 375 million tablets in 2016. If that number doesn’t tell you much, consider that only 56 million tablets were purchased in 2011.

Soon enough, tablet adoption by the professional workforce will be business as usual. Which means it might be time to consider getting your sales team onboard.
Tool 6: Lead-Generating Content Marketing

If you’re familiar with the methodology behind inbound marketing, you probably also know something about the importance of creating a high-quality website. Specifically, you need a website that contains engaging content that will attract potential buyers to your company and its products and services, and eventually into your sales pipeline.

What Is Inbound Marketing?

Instead of buying ads, buying email lists or cold calling, the marketing method known as ‘inbound’ focuses on addressing the needs and solving problems for your ideal customer. Inbound techniques seek to attract people to your website, where they can learn more about what you sell because you’re speaking their language.

Inbound marketing is based on the truth that consumers buy differently today than they did 10 years ago. It suggests that today, brands need to market with a magnet – not a sledgehammer. As the competition for the attention of your audience mounts, having something relevant to say becomes more and more important. Remarkable, valuable content is the foundation of a good inbound strategy.
How Exactly Is That Strategy Built?

Research: It All Starts With Research
Who is your ideal customer, and what are they struggling with? What problems do they need to solve, and how can your product or service address it? And no, assumptions aren’t good enough. Assumptions need to be tested and confirmed through real data that is gathered through interviews and surveys.

Content: Create something they’ll love
Valuable content – in the form of videos, white papers and downloadable guides – that help your customers identify or solve a problem is much more welcome than spammy emails or intrusive pop-up ads. Create something your site’s visitors will love and they’ll give you something in exchange – in this case, an email address.

Content Promotion: Hang out with your customers
Once you’ve spent the time necessary to research your customer’s needs and have developed content that addresses them, you’ll need to promote that content to get it out in front of your audience. Your research will have provided insights into where your audience hangs out online. Tools like blogging, social media, content syndication, SEO and paid media are just some of the ways your content will rise to the top.
Nurture Your Customers: Following up is crucial

Once a prospect has shown an interest in your content, follow up. It’s really that simple. Continue the conversation with content that’s targeted to them. Using an integrated marketing platform makes this possible.

Convert Prospects to Customers: Relationship maintenance is the key to conversion

By keeping the conversation going, and by knowing where your customers are in the decision making process, you’ll be developing warm leads with a much higher conversion rate than other lead generation methods.
Tool 7: Personalized Marketing Tools

Did you know? Personalized content does 42% better.

According to a leading marketing automation vendor, marketing targeted to a specific website visitor performed 42% better than generic messages.

We’ve already determined that generating and then properly distributing high-quality content is one of the best ways to draw qualified leads into your funnel, and then into the orbit of your sales team. The problem is that people are not static. They access your content from multiple devices, and they come at your content from any number of different channels. As their experience with your company grows, their needs and interests will change.

With an integrated marketing platform it’s possible – simple, even – to make your marketing more relevant to the needs and interests of your website visitors. It’s called Smart Content, because it’s intelligently and automatically personalized to your customers’ needs. It allows you to deliver content that is specifically tailored to where a customer is in his or her buying process. In short, it lets you target content based on anything you know about your contacts.
How Does Smart Content Work?

- Smart Content alters the content displayed within rich-text-modules depending on viewer characteristics. By creating lists that recognize the different lifecycle stages of a prospect, you can customize the content that people in each lifecycle stage will see. Visitors see content that is personalized just for them.
- A first-time visitor to your website will see default content. But if a visitor to your site has previously filled out a form (as part of a call-to-action, for instance) or is already a customer, your system will recognize them, and create personalized content and a personalized message for them.
- According to HubSpot, a marketing software firm that spent more than a year studying the data from over 93,000 calls-to-action, CTAs targeted to a specific user performed 42% better than calls-to-action that were generic.
Different Experiences and Different Views for Different Prospects

Your company attracts people from a variety of industries, and with a range of experience levels. Your sales team already tailors its emails to different audiences. Shouldn’t your website operate in the same way? And shouldn’t your loyal customers have a more personalized experience than first-time visitors? Our automated lead-nurturing software evolves along with your customers, and assures that the right person always receives the content that’s most relevant to them, at just the right time.
At IQnection, a full-service web design and web marketing agency, we’re 100 percent committed to the philosophy of continuous improvement – especially where service to our clients is concerned. Along with web design and development services and up-to-the-minute search engine optimization offerings, we’re known for our success in social media marketing, email marketing, and personalized content creation. And because we look at web marketing differently, we’re also known for consistently generating leads and customers for our clients. We have a 15-year history of helping companies and organizations in the manufacturing and distribution, commercial construction, consulting and service organizations, and ecommerce spaces.

To contact us by phone please call: 215.345.5424
To find us online visit: www.IQnection.com