The Importance of Social Selling & the Development of a Social Selling Class

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Social selling is a business-to-business strategy that every sales professional should understand in order to increase effectiveness and remain competitive in today's market. Today's most widely-used social media platforms have been in existence for only a decade, and as a result, many university sales and marketing programs have not developed courses in social selling. To address this issue, this paper begins with a literature review on how social media impacts the traditional sales process, discusses the importance of social selling proficiency, outlines a class designed to incorporate these skills into university sales education, and provides instructors with implications on how to implement such a course.

INTRODUCTION

Social selling is a business-to-business strategy that every sales professional should understand in order to increase effectiveness and remain competitive in today's market. Business-to-business salespeople face a number of challenges, such as increased competition, commoditization of products, and qualified lead generation, to name a few (Rodriguez, Peterson, and Krishnan, 2013). With social selling, salespeople can use social media platforms to research, prospect, and network by sharing educational content and answering questions. As a result, they are able to build relationships until prospects are ready to buy (Minsky and Quesenberry, 2016). According to research by Forrester, businesses see social media as the place where buyers are, and therefore the dominant sales

channel of the future. In fact, 36 percent believe that social selling will become the "default way to engage with buyers in the future" (2017).

Social selling has been defined in different ways in the literature. A common premise of many of these definitions is that social selling is buyer-centric. Ralf VonSosen, the head of marketing for sales solutions at LinkedIn, defines social selling as "…utilizing the relationships, connections and insights available in social channels to facilitate a better experience in both buying and selling" (Berkman, 2013). Jamie Shanks, social selling trainer and author, states that social selling is "Meeting the buyer where the buyer is conducting due diligence and arming themselves with information, to make informed decisions – online. Social selling is also about leveraging these online tools to help a sales professional have a more pertinent and effective conversation with their buyer" (2016). These definitions emphasize improving interactions with buyers. Other definitions highlight that communication between buyers and salespeople is increasingly accomplished via social media (Moore et al., 2015). Shanks' definition is used for purposes of the class and this paper.

Understanding that social selling is but one part of the total sales strategy (e.g., sales enablement and digital selling), salespeople should use relevant material that their company produces, but not rely on it. Instead, the focus should be user generated content (UGC) by both the salesperson and the prospect (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Accordingly, instead of looking inward to the their own organization for content, social selling prescribes that salespeople must generate their own

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information to demonstrate their knowledge of the field and establish themselves as an expert. This information should also be shared with prospects as a means of building relationships.

Today's most widely-used social media platforms have been in existence for only a decade, and as a result, many university sales and marketing programs have not developed courses in social selling. To address this issue, this paper begins with a literature review on how social media impacts the traditional sales process, discusses the importance of social selling proficiency, outlines a class designed to incorporate these skills into university sales education, and provides instructors with implications on how to implement such a course.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media in the Sales Process

The use of social media has progressed from a simple tool used for connecting with friends to a valuable platform organizations can use to reach new buyers (Rodriguez, Peterson, & Krishnan, 2013). Over the last decade social media has drastically changed the ways people communicate with each other, and the same is true for how buyers gather and exchange information about the products they purchase (Henning-Thurau et al., 2010). Because each of these are central tenants in sales, social media will inherently have a profound effect on personal selling. Social media is disrupting conventional sales methods and strategies, and also provides much opportunity for growth (LinkedIn, 2017).

In a marketplace that is increasingly becoming more competitive for companies, social media provides another means by which salespeople can serve their buyers (Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu, and Krush, 2016), especially when one considers that 55% of buyers use social media during their own searches for information (Giamanco and Gregoire, 2012). The opportunities that this medium provides are understood in the industry as 73% of B2B sales and account management professionals considered social selling to be "valuable" (Sales for Life, 2015) and 78.6% of salespeople using social media to sell outperform those who were not (Fidelman, 2012). Despite this evidence, however, Fidelman (2012) also found that because so few

salespeople are trained on using social media in the sales process, a large gap exists between actual usage and the medium's potential.

A large part of this potential is that social media can account for more than basic lead generation. According to Andzulis, Panagopoulos, and Rapp (2012), social media a) has the ability to simplify or expedite the close by enriching and adding value to earlier stages of the sales funnel; b) can facilitate the overall process leading to a close; and c) can help collaboration between the customer and company to identify product needs, improvements, and delivery times. Social media is a genuine source of quality leads, and can even be better than tradition sales methods (Barysevich, 2018). Social media can create a better environment for sales because it allows for fair play, meaning it allows anyone to communicate with anyone, and you can meet your customer half way. In addition, social media allows you to portray yourself sincerely and authentically, which is what attracts new buyers (Barysevich, 2018). Finally, social media allows buyers the opportunity to engage with your whenever they want, and you should always respond. Companies that engage in social selling get a 119% higher ROI compared to tradition sales tactics (Sales for Life, 2017).

> Some data on the benefits of engaging in social selling are (LinkedIn, 2017):

- 78.6% of salespeople who use social media to sell out-perform those who don't (Forbes)
- 98% of reps with 5,000+ LinkedIn contacts reach or surpass their sales quotas vs. just 52% of those with fewer than 250 (The Sales Benchmark Index)
- A lead developed via social media is 7x more likely to close (IBM)
- Organizations using social selling have seen a 10-20% increase in win rate, 20-30% acceleration in cycle time, and 10-15% increase in revenue (KISSMetrics)
- 90% of top selling salespeople whom are leveraging social selling (LinkedIn)

We will first begin by identifying the steps of the sales process, with a discussion of how social media may influence the salesperson and/or buyer

behavior. These steps include: Prospecting and Lead Generation, Preapproach and Prospect Research, Needs Identification, Presentation, Closing, Customer Service and Relationship Management/Reqesting Referrals and Social Selling Proficiency.

Prospecting and Lead Generation

Filling the pipeline with new leads is an ongoing challenge for sales professionals. One of the greatest benefits afforded by social media is the ability to research and learn about new leads (Smilansky, 2016). Lead generation through social media can be simpler, faster, and more effective than conventional methods. In fact, 90 percent of C-level executives say they never reply to cold calls or emails (LinkedIn, 2015). In order to gain access to decision makers, salespeople must find new methods to prospect for new business. Social media can be used to reach potential buyers, and multiple platforms can be used simultaneously to increase effectiveness and outreach. They key to successful social media lead generation is to first identify where prospects digitally reside. With over 106 and 317 million unique monthly users, respectively, LinkedIn and Twitter have massive potential for lead generation (Top Social Network Demographics, 2017).

LinkedIn's Sales Navigator tool enables salespeople to "prospect smarter, not harder" (LinkedIn, 2017). The tool has a number of key features to enhance prospecting techniques. Real-time updates provide relevant insights on accounts and leads, including job changes, news mentions, and new potential leads. Lead Recommendations quickly identify more people at target accounts with custom suggestions. TeamLink uncovers the best ways to connect with prospects through a salesperson's network. The CRM Widget allows users to view LinkedIn information in CRM programs such as Salesforce or Microsoft Dynamics (LinkedIn, 2015).

Twitter, although not primarily known as a professional network, has introduced prospecting features, such as the Lead Generation Card. This tool makes it easy for prospects to express interest in a company's offering by quickly and securely sharing information with a business without leaving Twitter or filling out an inconvenient form. When a user responds, their name, @username,

and email address are already pre-filled within the Card (Twitter, 2013). With tools like Hootsuite, salespeople can conduct Twitter searches based on a #hashtag, content query, @Twitter handle, or geographic location to find users Tweeting about specific topics. This provides opportunity to find new prospects who are in search of solutions. Salespeople can identify users who qualify as prospects and join the same conversations/groups, or directly approach them by following, re-Tweeting, or liking Tweets. CRM extensions can also add the Twitter prospect's information to help maintain contact with users. A multitude of other social media platforms (such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat) provide additional opportunity to reach millions of potential prospects.

For example, one study used a data mining approach to social media and developed a formal information system using Facebook pages (Meire, Ballings, and Van den Poel, 2017). Within this research, the authors found Facebook pages to be a valuable tool to improve the qualification prediction of prospects into leads worth pursuing. Giamanco and Gregoire (2012) also provided specific examples of this advanced usage:

> Using data intelligence tools like InsideView, salespeople can gain relevant, real-time insights about the companies and buyers they've targeted. They can set up trigger alerts for such topics as leadership change, acquisitions, new products, funding developments, and corporate challenges. They can "follow" companies to receive news of business developments. Beyond picking up free-ranging clues like these, they can use a social network's direct messaging function to ask a prospect a few qualifying questions. Indeed, a message format can be particularly helpful in vetting a lead, since responses must be short and are thus likely to get straight to the point. (p. 92)

Preapproach and Prospect Research

Prior to an interaction with a buyer, a salesperson is expected to have knowledge of the company. Social media can help facilitate prospect research. People spend a considerable share of their lives on social media, which serves as a forum to exchange thoughts, feelings, and preferences. Buyers, like any other social media

user, often share buying signals and other invaluable insights. Salespeople are frequently taught to scan a prospect's office for clues that might be conversation starters or commonalities. Items such as degrees, awards, and photos are potential rapport builders. Now, this information is often shared freely over social media. Further, people tend to post information about themselves on social networks that they often do not advertise in person. By monitoring a buyer's social behavior (and using the right tools) a salesperson can gain insights such as what content is being downloading from a vendor's website, what videos a buyer is sharing with friends, and what he or she is "liking" or responding to in real time (Smilansky, 2016). A salesperson has the capability to have significant understanding about the buyer, and even connect via social media, well before the first phone call or handshake. Social media can also assist in identifying key decision makers within a company.

Needs Identification

The social communication stream is two-way; salespeople can use social media to distribute content and engage in "social listening". The most effective salespeople know that listening can be the most important part of the job. Conceptually, social listening is no different – the goal is to gain a greater understanding of a buyer – it is just employing a new medium to do so. Social listening can benefit salespeople by finding patterns of engagement, monitoring competition, identifying thought leaders, collecting product feedback, and much more. For example, salespeople can identify trigger points on social media to start needs identification conversations. When a salesperson understands patterns of engagement, key issues, or underlying causes behind issues that come up in conversations, a more valuable presentation can be constructed.

Presentation

Traditionally, the key role of a salesperson was a purveyor of information. However, the abundance of information online has made buyers more informed than ever. Social media has permanently changed the way people search for and find information. By perusing social media, buyers can learn about the industry in which they operate, competitors, trends,

potential vendors, product reviews, and much more. Marshall, Moncrief, Rudd, and Lee suggest that, "in certain circumstances, clients may know more than the seller about the selling firm's own products" (2012). Information is now a commodity, and a salesperson no longer provides value simply by informing a buyer of product features.

Research from Forrester demonstrates the buyer's shift away from sales as a primary source of influence: 60% of buyers prefer not to interact with a sales rep as the primary source of information; 68% prefer to research on their own, online; and 62% say they can now develop selection criteria or finalize a vendor list (2017). The primary role of a salesperson is no longer to inform buyers of a product, but to create a customized solution and communicate value. Opportunity exists for salespeople to provide value by translating this information into customized solutions for the buyer. While buyers have access to the information, they may not necessarily have the time, knowledge, or desire to research and apply it (Marshall et al., 2012).

As buyers increasingly turn to social media to learn about companies, salespeople have the opportunity to share relevant content that boosts their credibility as a consultative partner. Additionally, quality content (such as educational videos or expert blogs) can help buyers become thoroughly familiar with products, and actually assist them in solving problems or concerns.

Social media can also enhance a salesperson's knowledge of a buyer, enabling them to create more applicable, customized value propositions. "Listening" to a buyer on social media can provide insight into their business, their challenges and pain points, and behavioral data that can enable a salesperson to make future presentations that are relevant and personalized.

Closing

Focusing only on closing as an indicator of sales skill is similar to a evaluating a professional athlete only on their last play of the game. A final closing question can be the most obvious success moment, but successful closing requires a salesperson to work effectively throughout the entire process. Andzulis, et al. (2012) state that "Indeed, social media has the ability to simplify or expedite the

close by enriching and adding value to earlier stages of the sales funnel". Social media can facilitate the overall process leading to a close (although maybe not necessarily the closing question itself).

Customer Service and Relationship Management

Social selling provides companies with an opportunity to improve products. Salespeople have always operated at the intersection of buyers and sales organizations to create value for both (Agnihotri, Kothandaraman, Kashyap, and Singh, 2012). The ease and speed of social media gives companies the ability to get quick, voluntary feedback required to stay agile. Buyers can provide instant feedback on products, and even suggest new ideas. The buyer and company can collaborate to identify what products the customer demands, how products can be improved, and when they are expected (Andzulis et al., 2012). As a new form of communication, social media extends the ability to which salespeople can serve their buyers (Agnihotri et al., 2016). If a salesperson does not respond in a quick manner, that can lead to dissatisfied parties.

The conventional saying that a dissatisfied customer will tell between 9-15 people about their experience is now magnified. Social media makes it quicker and easier to tell hundreds (or even thousands, depending on the size of a buyer's network) about a poor experience. In a J.D. Power & Associates survey of more than 23,000 buyers, 67% of respondents reported having contacted a company via social media for support (2013). This provides salespeople another opportunity to build relationships with prospective companies by engaging in conversation. The real-time communication aspect of social media allows salespeople to respond and mitigate problems quickly. Similarly, salespeople must realize that these companies expect immediate attention, service, and problem resolution in regard to a myriad of issues. When a salesperson exceeds expectations, they open the door to the opportunity to ask for referrals from buyers.

As a new form of communication, social media extends the ability to which salespeople can serve their buyers (Agnihotri et al., 2016). Additionally, in this age of heighten privacy concerns, the increased use of social media helps in this regard. Because of the oft-used requirement of asking permission from the prospect before a relationship can begin (e.g., accepting an invitation to connect), social selling alleviates much of the intrusive nature inherent in traditional cold calling.

Referrals are an essential part of obtaining new business, and are more valuable than ever. According to a LinkedIn survey, 84% of B2B buyers start their buying process with a referral, and 90% of B2B buying decisions are influenced by a peer recommendation (2015). Buyers share more about their experiences through social media. Salespeople can request referrals from those sharing positive feedback, or even share the original post or tweet. A buyer's social network is also visible to a salesperson, making it feasible to request introductions to specific prospects, rather than asking for a generic referral.

LinkedIn's "Recommendations" tool can also assist with obtaining testimonials. Salespeople can request a recommendation in context (LinkedIn specifically refers to the job the recommendation is requested for) and allows the salesperson to review the recommendation before it posts. Once a recommendation is received, it can be linked or shared on other platforms.

Social Selling Proficiency

In today's digital market, where roughly two-thirds of the B2B buyers make decisions via online content, it is imperative that salespeople have an understanding of social selling (LinkedIn, 2015). Despite the over-arching view that the use of social media in the B2B sales process is important, it is still not predominantly used because salespeople are not trained in how and when to use it (Itani, Agnihotri, and Dingus, 2017). These authors also found that gaining the skills necessary to sell in a social media environment was only encouraged by 22% of companies and only 11% offer training in that area, but that when companies did offer training, adoption jumped from 28% to 74%. Consequently, those not harnessing the potential of social media throughout the sales process may find themselves quickly left behind competitively.

For many companies, a discrepancy exists between the significance and usage of social selling. Although the literature suggests that applying social media in sales

is advantageous, current use in B2B sales appears to be in an early stage. In a study by Guesalaga, 70% of companies surveyed were either not using social media in sales, or were just exploring its use (2016). Similarly, executives surveyed by Wiersema noted that the use of social media in B2B sales is limited in spite of its recognized importance (2013).

As salesforces begin to be filled by younger, tech-saavy employees, one might assume that social sales will emerge naturally. However, research by Moore et al. suggests that in general, older sales professionals are adopting social media at a faster rate than their younger colleagues (2015). Rather than age, Guesalaga found that the most important predictor of social media usage in sales is organizational competence, meaning the seller company's knowledge, productivity, and expertise with social media (2016).

If organizations aim to successfully employ social selling, they need to build organizational competence and commitment. The experience and expertise of candidates to sales jobs (whether managers or individual contributors) must be explicitly considered (Guesalaga, 2016). Simply employing younger salespeople who are more apt to use social tools may not be a sufficient solution; salespeople must also be competent in social selling strategies. Therefore, it is the responsibility of academics to educate students in social selling. This paper fills this gap by providing evidence of how a social selling class was built, and the appreciation students had for the knowledge they learned.

While the evidence is clear that a link exists between social media use and sales performance, social media use alone does not guarantee this result (Itani et al., 2017; Agnihotri et al., 2016; Rodriguez et al, 2012). It is but one tool that can be used to great effect, but should be considered an enhancement in the overall sales process.

In conclusion, social selling is an important skill for future sales professionals and leaders, and this expemplified the need to develop a course in social selling and make sure our students are equipped with the skills needed to be successful in their future careers. The remainder of this paper will detail how we developed a social selling course to do just that.

SOCIAL SELLING COURSE

The business-to-business social selling course was initially offered online to undergraduate students in Summer 2017, and had an enrollment of 20 students. The concept of a social selling course progressed from a module in the Advaned Selling course. Social selling was initially introduced as a two-week module, however new curriculum and assignments presented the need for an independent course. The course required reading, course description, objectives, course content and student feedback are now discussed.

Required Reading

Shanks, Jamie (2016), *Social Selling Mastery: scaling up your sales and marketing machine for the digital buyer*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Hoboken, New Jersey.

Course Description

Social Selling is a key strategy for sales and marketing professionals seeking a better way to connect with today's modern buyer. This course will show students how to capture the attention and interest of business leadership, turn relationships into sales, and how to use social media to obtain resources that further their careers. The key is to reach the buyer where they're conducting due diligence—online, by showcasing a personal brand approach. The challenge is then to strike the right balance of content and engagement to be seen as a helpful resource that can guide the buyer toward their ideal solution. Beginning with the big picture and gradually honing the focus, students will learn the techniques that will change their entire approach with the buyer and the way they conduct business on social media. Students will be able to take away the tools and information from this course directly into the market place to achieve positive, innovative, and business driving results.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will have:
- Defined what social selling is and how it can be used in todays market.
- Contrasted recent and current trends and innovations in social selling;
- Examined how social selling information spreads/diffuses over social;

- Evaluated the effectiveness of a social selling strategy using appropriate and informative metrics for tracking strategy performance;
- Created a personal brand for a successful social selling strategy;
- Created a social selling presentation

Modules
- Module 1: Creating a Mindset Shift for a Digital Transformation
- Module 2: Social Selling Mastery for the Sales Professional
- Module 3: Building a Lead Factory with Digital Content Marketing
- Module 4: Scaling Up with Sales Operations and Sales Enablement

Assignments (rubric can be found in Appendix B)
- Assignment 1: conduct a personal SWOT analysis and online audit
- Assignment 2: create a personal brand positioning and take your personal brand online
- Assignment 3: create/update/optimize your social media profile on LinkedIn (Dover et al. 2015). This includes having the students find their social selling index score (Dover & Peterson, 2016).
- Assignment 4: produce and publish either a written blog, video blog, or a short podcast around a particular subject related to a company you aim to work for, or an industry you aspire to work in
- Assignment 5: write and publish a 500-word article and include a creative headline about how you can provide value in your dream job (specific company or industry)
- Assignment 6: build an audience profile of 5-6 companies in industries you aspire to work in. Then find two top key employees/executives in each of these companies and connect with them through a custom connection request and opt them into your network

Build Your Personal Brand Assignment
- Part 1: Thinking of Your Brand – Imagine Yourself as a Brand
- Part 2: Personal Brand Positioning

- Part 3: Take Your Personal Brand Online
- Part 4: Create/Update/Optimize Your Social Media Profiles

Social Selling Presentation (rubric can be found in appendix A)

YouTube presentation of their personal brand assignment, showing how they have become a more successful social seller. The students show how they have grown into a successful social seller by follow the four-step framework within the book (Shanks, 2016) to find buyers, educate yourself and your buyers, engage your buyers, and develop a network.

1. **Find** a buyer, his or her buying committee, and his or her buying influences, then socially surround all these people to gather market intelligence.

2. **Educate** yourself and your buyer to have more contextual conversations that build rapport and trust. Digital insights are key to shaping a buyer's journey.

3. **Engage** your buyers with digital insights that push them off their status quo so they think differently about their go-to-market priorities.

4. **Develop** a network of people that can continue to open opportunities for you. You recognize that your "network is your net worth"

Hootsuite Certification

As part of the student program, students are given free access to receive the Hootsuite Platform Certification (value $99). Hootsuite is a social media dashboard that allows individuals and brands to monitor, listen, and engage with their audiences across multiple platforms in a centralized location.

Discussions

- *Discussion 1*: What is the difference between social media and social selling? Provide at least one source to support your point of view.
- *Discussion 2*: "If people like you, they will listen to you, but if they trust you, they'll do business with you." – Zig Ziglar How does this apply to the four-step system to leverage your social

selling strategy? Discuss how you have been able to find, educate, engage and develop a buyer or network in the past, or how you hope to do so in the near future.

- *Discussion 3*: Creating a Social Selling Routine – What does your 30-60 minute daily social selling routine currently look like, or what would you like it to look like?

- *Discussion 4*: Why does misalignment exist between sales and marketing? Discuss two reasons for the misalignment and at least one way to solve this problem. Please include at least one source (not the book) to substantiate your argument.

- *Discussion 5*: Connect with (a social seller's name) on LinkedIn. Here is an example of a practitioner that is actively using social selling for their company – notice how their profile is structured not like a resume, but talking about the end result of what they are providing for those they are connecting with. Discuss two ideas you have taken from looking at his profile that you can use in your personal social selling process.

- *Discussion 6*: Read through the below two articles, and then discuss how YOU could use twitter for social selling. If you don't have a Twitter account, create one and start the process!

  https://www.saleshacker.com/cashing-in-on-twitter-with-social-selling/

  https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-practically-use-twitter-social-selling-ankur-chaudhary?trk=mp-reader-card

Student Feedback

Student feedback about the course was very positive, and all students found it beneficial to their future career. Below are some examples of student feedback:

- This semester has really helped me a lot with stepping out of my comfort zone. I've learned more about myself like my strengths and weaknesses. I can work on myself and my personal brand online to further me in the business world. I'm now more of a social seller

than I ever thought possible. This class has also opened my eyes with how important social media is.

- During this class, I've felt that I could really be myself. The guidelines for every assignment, were simple and very achievable! Thank you for the opportunity to challenge myself, and put all my thoughts on paper. From our strengths and weakness assignment to acquiring a LinkedIn profile and reach out to potential employers, this class is a must take not only for business majors but for every entrepreneur mind on campus. This class has been amazing, I finished our assigned book in a month, a book which by the way tied seamlessly to the assignments you gave us. The Hootsuite certification was my favorite assignment. To know how much work goes into social media campaigns, and to learn the analytics that everyone is oblivious to was an awesome experience that I talked to a few of my peers about. While taking this course I strived not for a grade but for a full-blown experience. I always want to get out the most of every class I pay for, but this was a great challenge, taking not only myself but some of my peers out of my comfort zone.

- I found this class to be much more useful in real life terms than most of the other classes I have taken.

- This class has challenged me like no course has before. It made me really get out of my comfort zone, which I truly enjoyed.

- I really think this class would be great for all Juniors or Seniors to take as they are trying to enter the professional world. It's also great for entrepreneurs. The fact that we have to reach out to executives and people in the industry of choice.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTORS

For instructors who want to implement this social selling course, the below discussion provides recommendations for building, adapting and rolling out the class like this throughout the semester. Blackboard was used to administer the course, so the class was built online on blackboard. We started out by buying

and reading the Jamie Shanks "Social Selling Mastery" book, and then dividing the course into modules based on the book. We also spoke with experts who are using LinkedIn for social selling. Based on those discussions, we determined that it would be more beneficial for students to learn how to professionally brand themselves online rather than take exams. Students use LinkedIn to develop their professional network (Dover et al. 2015).

Therefore, a personal brand assignment was created that is divided into six separate assignments throughout the semester. This way students can submit different sections and get feedback from the professor before finalizing thir personal brand assignment at the end of the semester. Collectively, the assignments are designed to help students assimilate into social selling. The "sale" in class is for students to sell themselves as viable job candidates to their targeted company or industry. The expectations in class mimic social selling expectations of a B2B sales manager. Students will establish and optimize their social media profiles, differentiate between business/personal use, incorporate social selling into daily activities, obtain a professional certification, make a virtual presentation, build their professional network, and start to participate in industry conversations.

We then added a social selling presentation which allows the students to showcase what they have learned throughout the course in terms of building their personal brand and their confidence. The students show how they have grown into a successful social seller by follow the four-step framework within the book to find buyers, educate yourself and your buyers, engage your buyers, and develop a network. The students record a video of themselves on youtube and then share it with the class for peer feedback in addition to professor feedback.

The students were also given free access to become Hootsuite certified. The Hootsuite certification is important because it gives them the knowledge and experience of using a social media dashboard that allows individuals and brands to monitor, listen, and engage with their audiences across multiple platforms in a centralized location. You can use the student program at Hootsuite by filling out the application for your course and then the student program team will give you directions on how to move forward. The students take the Hootsuite certification ($99) for free.

In addition, six discussions were used so students could discuss important topics in social selling with their peers and professor. This allows for engagement between students, and allows them to think and respond to relevant questions and topics surrounding social selling. These discussions should be adapted and/or changed due to the constantly changing nature of the subject. Social selling is an evolving topic and course content cannot remain static.

This course was taught over a summer semester (8 weeks) but can easily be adapted for a 16 week semester as well. Feedback was collected from students three times during the semester – at the beginning, middle and end. The feedback from the beginning of the semester is first impression feedback of what they think of the course. The feedback from the middle of the semester is used to make any changes/adaptations for the remaining part of the semester. The feedback at the end of the semester is what they thought of the course and my teaching. The feedback is then used to make changes moving forward. Students spend the first week reading through the syllabus and understanding all the parts of the course, in addition to completing the introduction discussion (introducing themselves to their peers). Then each week they have a discussion and an assignment. In addition, they have to complete the Hootsuite certification by the 7th week of the course. Then they submit their social selling presentation and build your personal brand assignment during the 8th week of the course. The class all participates in providing feedback to each other on their social selling presentations. It is a fast paced class that requires professor feedback for all the students individually each week – on discussions and assignments.

We are happy to share the syllabus, other course content, and other helpful insights with professors seeking to develop a course in social selling.

Appendix A

Oral Communication Rubric

Evaluative Criteria	Fails to Meet Expectations (1)	Meets Expectations (2)	Exceeds Expectations (3)
Concept Clarity	□ Main concepts are unclear	□ Main concepts are mostly clear	□ Main concepts are clear
Logic	□ Shows weak logical flow	□ Relates most ideas logically	□ Provides logical scheme to guide reader through
Voice Clarity	□ Speaks without voice clarity and confidence	□ Speaks with voice clarity and confidence	□ Speaks with voice clarity and confidence; engages the audience
Fillers	□ Excessive use of slang and fillers	□ Some use of slang and fillers	□ Infrequent use of slang and fillers
Eye Contact	□ Reads directly from presentation materials	□ Refers to presentation materials occasionally	□ Flows seamlessly without relying on presentation materials
Visual Aids	□ Displays aids that are difficult to read or distracting from presentation	□ Displays aids that are easy to follow and are appropriate for the presentation	□ Displays aids that enhance the quality of the presentation
Professionalism	□ Dressed inappropriately for a business setting (flip flops, shorts, baseball cap, revealing clothing); and/or unkempt	□ Dressed acceptably in business casual (long pants, button shirt, skirt and blouse); neat and well-groomed	□ Dressed in a professional manner (suit, sport coat, tie, business dress); neat and well groomed

Appendix B

Written Communication Rubric

Evaluative Criteria	Fails to Meet Expectations (1)	Meets Expectations (2)	Exceeds Expectations (3)
Purpose	□ Fails to recognize the relevant purpose of the assignment	□ Identifies the essential purpose of the assignment	□ Elucidates the key purpose of the assignment
Relevance	□ Fails to stay focused on the purpose of the paper	□ Limits discussion of topics unrelated to purpose	□ Focuses discussion solely on the purpose
Logic	□ Shows weak logical flow	□ Relates most ideas logically	□ Provides logical scheme to guide reader through
Organization	□ Paper is disjointed and hard to follow	□ Paper is structured in a way that is easy to follow	□ Paper is well organized in a way that leads reader to key points
Language	□ Composes inadequate sentences that lack clarity and contain seriously distracting errors, such as sentence fragments and comma splice	□ Uses good sentence structure in general, with some variety in structure	□ Articulates in clear, concise, and correct sentences and effectively balances a variety of sentence structures
Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation	□ Contains numerous errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation that interfere with comprehension	□ Follows normal conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation with few minor errors	□ Exemplifies essentially error-free writing in terms of spelling, grammar, and punctuation
Format	□ Distracting/poor use of margins, font, and headings.	□ Good use of margins, font, and headings.	□ Clean, crisp and professional; excellent use of margins, font, and headings

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