



How Salespeople Are Using Technology to Do More With Less

In the past eight months, sales professionals have gotten a crash course in doing more with less, with technology and automation becoming even more critical to improving effectiveness and achieving success. Members of HSMIA's Sales Advisory Board (SAB) discussed how technology is enabling them to make successful sales with fewer resources on a recent call. Here are key takeaways from their discussion:

COMMUNICATING WITH CUSTOMERS

Several SAB members said that they are investing heavily in video tools to better communicate and connect with customers and prospects. VIDEOR, AllSeated, and Videolicious were mentioned as great resources to enable you to virtually walk through a space with customers and give them the experience of being there in person. "Everyone's embracing it," one SAB member said. "It seems like our customers are very much pro-video, so we are investing in video and social-distancing tools."

"I think the critical side of technology aiding sales process is, how would it help the salesperson paint a vivid picture to a client?" another SAB member said. "Anything that has to do with painting a picture to the client is what is going to succeed right now, because we can't do site tours, we can't travel, we can't do anything, yet we are still expected to sell."

Basic technology platforms such as websites and social media also are still important avenue for communication with customers. SAB members said now is a good time to reevaluate what content you're putting out there. "Now is the time to really do an assessment and make sure that the right content is being shown to the right marketplace," one member said.

Another SAB member's company has created portals that enable customers to log on whenever it is convenient for them to look at reports or other information that previously they would have had to wait for the seller to pull and send to them. "It's a waste of sellers' time to do that," the member said. "We've really started focusing on making it more self-driving for the customer, which frees up the seller and lets the customer grab it whenever they want. It's more efficient for both sides."

CREATING EFFICIENCIES

One major benefit of technology — or drawback, depending on your point of view — is how it can take over many of the menial tasks that salespeople do, freeing them to work on other things. "With less people, we're trying to find every way to create efficiencies," one SAB member said, "and take the humans out of it to some degree, because we simply have to."

Another member added: “We’re investing in AI to take away some of the repeatable tasks that we don’t need sellers to do. Jobs like reading audits that are the same thing over and over again, we can have a bot do all of that for us, and frankly, they’re better at it. They can run it more consistently.”

Another SAB member mentioned that salespeople are most valuable when they are building relationships, which is something that technology can help encourage. “We have to be solution people, but it may not be a solution directly for a piece of business,” the member said. “But in the long run, we’re going to win, because the relationships are critical. The technology that we’re using now is what’s going to help us develop those relationships.”

SAB members also said that now is the time to reevaluate partnerships — to see how they are benefiting the hotel and its customers, and potentially cut partners that aren’t as efficient or beneficial. “We’re finding that our partnerships are getting tighter and we’re working with the same people producing new and different initiatives,” one member said. “We’re partnering with other companies and using their technology to reach new clients and build relationships.”

“We’re cognizant of what partners we are truly working with,” another SAB member said. “We’re making a real effort to only work with companies on the right business model.”

HYBRID MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Even after the threat of coronavirus has passed, hybrid meetings and events will continue, which means it is crucial to get on board with them now, SAB members said. “We know it’s going to be the way of the future,” one member said. “But I don’t think anybody really knows the right approach yet, because every way is going to be different. We’re trying to go with what the customer actually wants, not just what we think they want. Hybrid meetings are going to be really important in the future, and we want to get ahead of that.”

Another SAB member who recently attended a hybrid conference said it showed her how important it is to have the correct technology to connect in-person attendees with virtual attendees. “You’ve have got to have the correct tools that enable you to communicate like you’re all in the room,” the member said. “Property salespeople are going to have to quickly become very knowledgeable around all of the hybrid meeting products, especially all of the whiteboarding tools that are being used.”

But one SAB member warned that hybrid and virtual events are not as profitable as in-person events because they bring fewer people into the hotels. “We’ve got to get people back on the road and meeting and staying in our hotels,” the member said. “We want to support all of our hotels and owners, but if all we have are hybrid and virtual meetings, who is going to come to our hotels?”

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