

Smart Sales Managers Are the New Normal: A Crash Course in Generating More Revenue from Your Inside Sales Team in the Sales 2.0 Ecosystem | Josiane Feigon

The dynamic Sales 2.0 ecosystem is digital, diverse, connected—and dramatically different from the world that many sales managers cut their teeth on. Customers, talent, tools, prospecting... the rules have changed.

Customers don't answer phones, make appointments for lunch and golf, and read long whitepapers about your product. Today they do their own research—online, and talking to peers—and create their own sales cycles. Talent doesn't plan to put in time and pay their dues. They want to know why they're doing everything that's asked of them, they expect work to be F-U-N, and they expect their managers to give them all the answers immediately, SIRI style. Tools have grown far beyond noise-canceling headsets. Next-generation tools, processes, and prospecting practices are already driving revenue in the new economy. Welcome to the New Normal.

Managing a high-performing inside sales team by operating under the old sales rules just won't work.

The Old Ways Are Not the Best Ways

Many sales managers got promoted because they were stars as individual contributors. They knew how the old system worked, and knew how to work it. Now, with no training and pressure to produce, they just keep doing the same old things that haven't worked in several years:

- They structure their inside sales organizations around field teams, relying on traditional field sales to drive the majority of the revenue.
- They believe that customers want to schedule appointments with salespeople, and insist that their telemarketers call off expensive lists and hammer the phones for hours making cold calls.
- They manage with the brutal, "Always Be Closing" model of sales success: aggressively chase down your customers, hold them in a headlock while you present for an hour, and then try in vain to coerce them into buying.
- They believe that social media is an evil distraction that will pass and forbid salespeople from connecting with customers online.
- They insist on jumping in to close deals, saying "Watch me!"

- They are sure that the best tools they can provide a salesperson are a desk, laptop, phone, and headsets—which is more than they had when they were first hired.
- They can't understand why they cannot find top sales talent after posting the usual ads on Craigslist—for months.

They insist on using all of these failing strategies and more, on the theory that surely they have to work sometime.

“Managing a high-performing inside sales team by operating under the old sales rules just won't work.”

Their confusion is understandable: With tons of sales experience but little or no management training, they've been left to muddle through on their own. They arrive with outdated sales skills, few management skills, and little understanding of the new sales environment. They get no training, no support, no love, and enormous pressure to drive revenues. And that pressure builds each quarter: from the top, with bosses demanding higher quotas and new customer logos; and from the inside, with younger and younger salespeople, culturally and generationally diverse teams, and remote and virtual workers they can't see to manage. The bodies are piling up fast!

The New Normal Sales 2.0 Ecosystem Changes the Game

Sales 2.0 is different, REALLY different. And that means managers need to understand how it works and learn some new managing tricks.

Here's how that bullet list of shame for old school sales managers looks translated into the game-changing language of Sales 2.0:

- **Inside sales is driving revenue in every organization.** Field sales is lagging far behind, no longer connecting with busy customers who have no time or patience for chit-chat and golf.
- **Customers hate being robo-called.** They want you to see them as individuals, and they want you to take the time to get to know their needs before you call.
- **Always Be Recruiting is a much better strategy** for Sales 2.0 than Always Be Closing. It means that you are always creating a great work environment, always looking for and attracting the best talent, and naturally closing deals with half the effort of brute force.
- **The New Normal is digital, virtual, and totally connected.** The salespeople make connections with prospects online, ahead of time, and research everything about them. And customers do the same—they value peer recommendations and matchmaking over cold-call introductions.

- **They coach and mentor team members**, giving them information they can use and learn from. They don't do the job for them.
- **They provide the best tools**—the ones that are right for the job at hand—and they make sure team members are trained in how to use them effectively.
- **They are such good salespeople that they understand how to sell the best reps** out there on the idea of coming to work at their fun, fabulous, and dynamic workplace.

Get Started Being a Smart Sales Manager Now

Take heart: Smart sales managers are made, not born. So stop looking in the rearview mirror and look around you.

Forecast accuracy is one area that keeps managers up at night.

In this new world, sales forecasts and sales metrics are the most important tools in your arsenal. They apply to everything you do in Sales 2.0. Accurate sales forecasts are money in your pocket. According to the 2011 Inside Sales Performance Optimization Report, managers who conduct regular win/loss meetings with their teams experience greater forecast accuracy.

Both internal and external factors influence the health of managers forecast or pipeline. The more you know about your team members' personalities, habits, and motivators, the better you can make an informed decision about your forecast. Diagnosing where the sale sits is core to understanding what you can do to manage it in or out.

You also need to let go of the old rules about how to measure your team's success and motivate them to more success. Some managers watch their outbound calls and activity metrics dashboard and complain that "It's awfully quiet out there." Where are the ringing phones? But the new productivity is quiet: it's based on social, virtual, and mobile connections. Today's sales rules have changed dramatically. The old metrics are not measuring what really matters; insisting on measuring activities is not going to give you the results you want nor will it motivate anyone.

Getting up to speed on sales management strategies that work in the New Normal starts by understanding the Sales 2.0 world we really live in. This world operates at warp speed, is driven by digital connectivity, personal connection, collaboration, and virtual relationships. Everybody—customers, salespeople, and managers—is crazy busy and short on attention. And everybody—EVERYBODY—expects to be taken seriously, known personally, entertained, and have fun.

The next step is to get to know the four vital elements of the Sales 2.0 Ecosystem:

1. Customer 2.0, the elusive and independent buyer.
2. Talent 2.0, the multi-tasking and technically wired Millennial talent who are flooding the workforce.
3. Tools 2.0, the social-mobile-video Sales 2.0 tools.
4. Prospecting 2.0, where the new sales superheroes nurture customers over time with visual bling and real information.

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So stop looking in the rearview mirror and look around you.*

Customer 2.0: Independent, Tech-Savvy, and Busy

Today's customers are busy. They're also independent, tech savvy, very influenced by their social peers, and strongly independent: They want to shop their own channels. In the heart of hearts, they think that they don't really need you.

Ah, but they do.

They seem elusive, and they can start or stop the buying cycle anytime. But underneath, they just want an intelligent, knowledgeable, and receptive virtual salesperson to respond to their request. They are hungry for a trusting human connection, a virtual relationship they can collaborate with. They want you to know them personally, connect with them socially, know their friends, and engage in an intelligent conversation.

But they don't need to shake your hand: Customer 2.0 is more comfortable communicating and collaborating with virtual or remote sales reps than more formal face to face meetings with field sales. These busy, independent customers want the attention of salespeople—all of it.

The problem is, these customers are unpredictable. Even after they've said yes, they vanish for months. When they do come back to buy, it is generally at the last minute—and they want it NOW.

- Many deals are lost because buyers got new information, changed their minds at the last minute, or found other solutions to their problems. Make sure reps continue to drip information and entertainment their way so that they are always thinking of your solution.
- Encourage your reps to chase and revive old opportunities: Customer 2.0 has been known to come back after a long slumber and remind you that they still need a solution, even after more than six months of silence.
- Today's pipelines must be larger than life. Always encourage your teams to build the pipeline five times larger early in the quarter and three times larger later in the quarter, to allow for fallout.
- This customer will listen to their social networks before anything so encourage your teams to socially solidify opportunities.

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Use New Sales Metrics

The pressure to drive new business and increase company revenues has never weighed so heavily on inside sales organizations and individual salespeople. Yet most people at the top—and even managers in the trenches—are holding on to outdated stereotypes of how to measure their success and motivate them to more success.

Customer 2.0 does not respond well to robo-stalking. They want you to know them personally, engage with them socially, know their friends, and engage in an intelligent conversation. And they are elusive: team members need to call around to make sure they are speaking with the person who actually has the power.

Use new metrics—ones that not only measure what's actually happening, but motivate your team to produce more:

- **Number of multiple contacts within the same organization:** This metric will encourage teams to call deeper and wider into the target company and build org charts.
- **Number of live meaningful conversations with prospects and partners:** Even the most slippery prospects crave a deep, meaningful, honest conversation—especially the power buyer. Encourage more LIVE conversations that are not wasted.

- **Number of collaborative conversations:** Customers may not come back twice, so incentivize teams to have meaningful live conversations that include collaborating with web conference or video presentations while they have the customer on the call.
- **Number of triple-threat introductions:** The phone can no longer fly solo in today's Sales 2.0 environment. It needs a little help from its friends: phone + email + social media friends. Send out at least 25 new intros per day.
- **Number of new LinkedIn contacts per week:** Motivate your people to engage socially (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, as starters) and listen for the live conversation feed. Remember, this customer likes to feel heard and is still hungry for relationships.
- **Number of inbound calls per day:** The goal is to generate enough interest from content lead nurturing email marketing campaigns that you receive phone requests from your prospects. Why? Because they have already self-educated and they're ready to talk.
- **Number of meetings and appointments that didn't get cancelled:** Since Customer 2.0 likes to back out of appointments at the last minute, consider using metrics that incent appointments to stick.

- **Number of web-conferencing iPad presentations:** Video is king. Reserve a web presentation and prep your (very short and visually enhanced!) PowerPoint slide deck for an eight-minute presentation.
- **Number of mobile messaging campaigns:** A growing number of organizations are utilizing mobile messaging in their blitzing efforts.

Talent 2.0: A Disruptive Team of Sales Superheroes

Talent 2.0 is the Millennial generation: young, energetic, digital natives who are flooding the workplace. These optimistic, self-confident, and ambitious salespeople may need to get up to speed on sales skills, but they are more than comfortable with forging virtual and personal connections with Customer 2.0.

This is all good, but it means that managers who came up through the trenches need to understand how they think and what they want from you as their manager:

- **Millennials like structure, so give it to them.** Make sure they know what's expected every day.
- **Clarity is crucial with these literal thinkers.** Say exactly what you mean, and don't leave out the details.

- **Millennials love collaborating, and they like fun and games.** Encourage them to work in teams and to play in teams after hours.
- **Give Millennials plenty of public recognition and personal encouragement.** They need both and respond with increased motivation.
- **Millennials are strong social networkers, but they don't always understand the difference between personal and professional.** Mentor them on creating a strong, professional network presence and social graph.

Focused as they are on the work, they also need FUN. This is their way of feeling acknowledged and getting feedback. These competitive inside salespeople need to be motivated all the time. The sales incentive business is a \$40 billion industry for a very simple reason: salespeople need regular kudos and acknowledgment. And they love public displays of fun—just look at all the happy, shiny people that show up in their Facebook pictures and Twitter activities.

“Talent 2.0 is the Millennial generation: young, energetic, digital natives who are flooding the workplace.”

Shape Up the Sales Forecast

This “What’s next?” generation is addicted to the chase, but they sometimes run so fast they zoom right past something essential and miss it. They also tend to take things at face value.

- They may see no reason for calling prospects who don’t answer their phones and don’t want to talk with them. Help them see the value of calling and making connections with prospects.
- They may believe that the No-Po—the no-power gatekeeper who wastes their time—is genuinely interested. If the No-Po says yes, they say “cool” and add it to their forecast. If the No-Po says jump, they ask “How high?” But the reality is, nothing will happen. Your role is to intervene and help your team get away from these professional funnel-cloggers.
- Many Millennials do not analyze information, they just want answers. To help them become independent thinkers, stop giving them quick answers and finishing their work for them.
- They are comfortable swimming in the social river, and that’s what you need. Encourage them to expand their digital footprint and make connections with potential prospects.

Sales Metrics That Make Sense

Your digitally astute team members know that metrics today have nothing to do with babysitting a robo-dialer and counting calls.

Because this group puts such a high value on productivity, members need to understand the WHY behind the metrics you ask for. What activities will get them there? How many meetings does it take to close a sale? How many dials a day are required to reach their sales goals? If you walk them through this thought process and the activity requirements, and explain the rules of engagement, you will encourage them to approach their proactive efforts with precision and patience and focused on productivity.

Tools 2.0: The Right Tools for the Job

Remember when inside salespeople were the “data hounds” of information? Today they are the content curators, finding and capturing customers through sales intelligence.

Smart use of the right tools captures intelligence, promotes productivity, and gives insight into customer needs. As manager, you need to know that even improving the top 20% of your sales team by providing them with better tools will create a more competitive group overall. Having the right tools and knowing how to use them is essential to your team’s success.

Make sure your team uses the appropriate tools throughout the entire sales cycle. Include a good mix of sales productivity/communication tools, sales intelligence tools, and social tools.

And don't be afraid of the technology marketplace! Some tools—trigger alerts like GoogleAlerts or Twitter, calendaring tools like iCal or Outlook, or collaboration tools like DropBox or YouSendIt—are already available in your office right now.

Using Tools for Sales Forecasting

Sales forecasting is part art and part science. The right tools, dashboards, data, and analytics contribute to the sophistication of forecasting. The more you learn these tools, the better you can track the life of an opportunity and accurately make future predictions.

- Your role is to make sure that your teams understand their tools and what they can provide in terms of their sales forecasts: Are they inputting data? Do they understand the analytics? Do they understand how to forecast opportunities?
- Get them to be honest and realistic in their forecasting regardless of how much pressure they are under.

Tools for Sales Metrics

Your organization may be ripping out landlines and using Skype, or VOIP, and smartphones, iPads, and social tools in prospecting efforts. But don't get carried away accumulating as many shiny tools as possible. Tools metrics focus on quality, not quantity:

- **Quality of their CRM:** Everything lives in the CRM. Tracking sales metrics can all happen from the CRM, and you can also monitor the quality of their information capture and data. How clean is the data? How updated is it?
- **Quality of active campaigns utilizing dialers:** Tools such as dialers will create an uptick and spike in the outbound numbers. Use dialers strategically, not as a crutch.
- **Quality of lists that translate to quality conversions:** List building is key. Resurrect old lists—Customer 2.0 comes back.
- **Quality of email templates stocked in their in library:** Building a robust selection of email templates for multiple attempts and content nurturing strategies is also effective. Customer 2.0 loves content and will pay attention to your well-designed ten-week nurture campaign.

- **Quality of LinkedIn profile:** Cultivate more and more connections with high influencers.
- **Quality of LinkedIn discussions per week:** Write such thought-provoking, insightful, fresh content about your space that you earn credibility and become involved in the inner circle of prospects listening for trigger events.

Prospecting 2.0: Nurture, Nurture, Nurture

Prospecting 2.0 involves the entire Sales 2.0 ecosystem: customer, talent, and tools. Encourage your sales teams to do their homework about clients, learning their needs, connecting with them virtually. Encourage them to use their positive energy and technical savvy to create content that intrigues, informs, and entertains with visual bling. Then make sure they drip that content over time strategically, in small bite-size pieces that leave customers wanting to know more.

Here's something else that may come as a surprise: Marketing is your friend. Align with marketing to assure a consistent marketing message that brands and evangelizes the solution. Call your team together before the campaign starts to make sure that they understand the message, that they can articulate it, and that they know what you expect from them.

- Help them craft good introductions based on this message, and stay on message throughout the cycle. Provide customized multiple-attempt email templates for your team to use.

- Make sure your team does not give up if they cannot reach the prospect live after a few tries. Your watchword should be, “Don’t let them get away!” They should immediately send email, leave a voice mail message, and follow up with a LinkedIn invitation.
- Explain that their solution has no boundaries. Make sure that they gather more names and speak to multiple departments in the customer’s organization—IT, Sales, Marketing, Finance, Engineering, and so on—until they find the right audience.

Prospecting and Sales Forecasts

The funnel is an activity magnet, and prospecting is the only way to build pipe and create activity. The more (and smarter) your teams prospect, the more activity they will generate. Whether it happens through call blitzing or content nurturing, they are creating activity.

- Help your team listen to what prospects say they need. Building quality relationships will keep your funnel from clogging up.
- Fill your team’s bucket with healthy leads to keep them positive and energized about the possibilities.

Prospecting and Sales Metrics

Prospecting 2.0 metrics focus on outbound activities:

- **Master prospecting plan:** A well-designed territory plan that includes Top 25 target accounts is essential. This is the best way to focus on preparation.
- **Visual proof:** How prepared are they to make calls? Are all their tools open and ready to go?
- **Nonnegotiable time for prospecting:** Prospecting still requires uninterrupted time. Sticking with that several times a week will increase productivity.
- **Qualified leads:** Smart prospecting efforts involve qualifying prospects to keep them in or out of the sales funnel.

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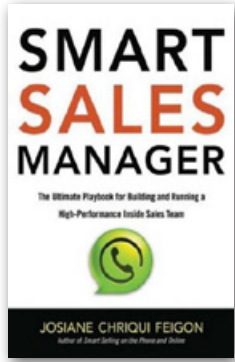
Get Smart, Manage Smart

Inside sales is now driving revenues in virtually every organization. That means more sales-people—and more managers. The operation is becoming large, complex, and delicate, and it takes skill to make it run efficiently. It's not your imagination: managing inside sales teams really has gotten more complicated. Fortunately, a good working knowledge of the elements of this New Normal Sales 2.0 ecosystem is close at hand, and much easier to assimilate than you may think.

Seeing the potential for brilliance in your people is where smart managers shine. Hold onto that insight and use it to start understanding what they are capable of, what motivates them, what their true potential is, and what they need to learn. Then work with them to motivate them to open up, learn new skills, and achieve all that they are capable of becoming.

Then lead smart, and take your successful, productive team of inside sales superheroes to the next level. 🦸

Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Josiane Feigon is President of TeleSmart Communications and author of the business bestseller, *Smart Selling on the Phone and Online*. She has trained 20,000+ salespeople and still counting. Consistently recognized among The Top 25 Most Influential Inside Sales Professionals, Josiane is one of the world's leading experts on inside sales team and management talent. She provides consulting, coaching, and training solutions for hundreds of Fortune 1000 companies, including Cisco, Autodesk, Citrix Systems, Informatica, Adobe, and Carahsoft—that consider her an invaluable part of their sales strategies. You can follow her Inside Sales Thought Leadership Blog at tele-smart.com.

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