



**WHO WILL BE THE
SALESPERSON OF
TOMORROW?**



EVOLUTION - THE LAW OF SURVIVAL

From prehistoric times, it is interesting to see how the concept of selling has undergone a change and with it, the persona of a 'salesperson' has also experienced subsequent transformation.

Evolution, or to simply put, change in characteristics over successive generations, has been the foundation of existence of mankind. This Darwin theory holds true for every ounce of change that we witness in the realm of selling or the profile of salesperson as well.

Selling – a transactional act which was focused on product or service features earlier underwent a series of changes owing to developments ranging from invention of printing press to the entry into the dot com world, globalisation and then the advent of cloud, IoT, data analytics era.

Acting on the momentum, the 'transactional' act also swayed towards a consultative hinge by becoming more relationship, collaboration and concept-driven. And the change in act reflected in the role essayed by the actor, i.e. the salesman also, over time.

And that's how the NEW salesperson was born.

WHAT CAUSED THIS SHIFT?

If you're not evolving, you're moving towards your own end. The only way to survive has been to move along with the change.

While that's more of a philosophical angle to see it, the changes in space of technology, human values, blurring geographical boundaries, financial policies, production practices etc., all had a trickle-down impact on not just the society but the industrial arm of it as well.

Owing to the connectedness of the ecosystem, the buyer behaviour and needs also changed and that's what pushed the oust of traditional salesperson, replacing it with a brand-new persona who doesn't sell but co-creates value with the buyer.

To get an idea of the degree of paradigm shift we're talking about, just look at one of the highest revenue grossing industrial mammoth- Amazon, whose retail arm fetches billions of dollars of revenue each year and that too, with absolutely zero salesmen!

**CHANGE IS INEVITABLE
WHILE GROWTH IS
OPTIONAL**



PEEKING INTO THE PAST

To understand the remodel, it is always beneficial to first fully comprehend the base version. Let's look at the typical profile of a yesteryear's salesperson.

A well-experienced, suited gentleman with a big bunch of sales collaterals and high relationship establishment quotient (be it through acquaintance dig-out or by a forced-friendship approach) is the typical persona one can draw up for a salesman of early 70s to 90s.

- When it came to the strategic selling tactic, a brute combat approach used to be a popular choice amongst salespeople earlier where the aim used to be to disarm the customer of any point of rejection by 'pushing' the product features. The ideology which they used to practice was 'Only my product would be good for you' giving out the vibes 'I know your business better than you'.
- Then came in the era of selling wars based on price points where the salesmen competed on the discounting thread and the one who offered the best deal won in the end.

Both the approaches were meant to perish sooner than later. The first one hinted at the de-prioritisation of customer's expectations or views while the second one painted the sellers as a not-so-honest party who initially inflate the price to showcase steep discounts later.



THE DOWNFALL

For obvious reasons the hard-selling couldn't bring success to salesmen for long. Few reasons which contributed to this expected downfall:

- No plan B ever and plan A comprising limited agility to accommodate any customer suggestion
- Tendency to over promise in order to make the sale
- Non-scientific quota allocation to salesmen
- Skewed and unstructured success measurement matrix for salesmen
- Quick abandonment of leads needing that extra effort or restructuring of the pitch
- Competitive and non-cohesive relationship between sales and marketing teams
- Uncertainty aligned with the 'blind-shot' marketing and selling

This fixation of salespeople or service providers with 'self' which started with pitching the features and price-point shifted to functionalities and then later onto benefit-advantage for the customer – but none was designed to survive the exponentially changing industry dynamics.



**CHANGE WAS NOT
NECESSARY IF SURVIVAL
WAS NOT MANDATORY**

WINDS OF CHANGE

The demise of one acted as the foundation for the emergence of its descendant – Salesperson 2.0!

The prior approach where customer used to be the secondary element in the selling-matrix was replaced with dealing with an empowered buyer approach.

Anytime, anywhere (read: online) availability of requisite information and an out-and-out digital transformation at both, the seller and buyer's end, were a few factors contributing to this 180-degree change.

With the customer emerging as a hyper-connected and smart breed, fully aware of his precise business needs, equipped with the information on market condition and his competitors' major moves – quite naturally, it expected something beyond regular from the salesmen.

Timely deliveries and an edge over the competition commanded dominance over those power-lunches and business-breakfast meetings. And thus, the era of intelligent and value-based selling was embarked upon.

With consultative selling taking the gears in hand, the solution and concept seller was born who leveraged the product expertise to bring solutions and value to the customer.



**YOU MUST MAKE A CHOICE TO
TAKE A CHANCE TO USHER-IN
THE MUCH-NEEDED CHANGE**

DAWN OF CEREBRAL SELLING

Modern sciences have proven that most of the decisions taken by humans – in personal or professional lives, are emotionally initiated and logically validated. Catering to both these aspects, a set of modern selling principles based on science and empathy have eventually emerged.

A quick look at few of these principles which now drive the behaviour pattern of salesmen around the globe:

- Rise of account-based-marketing (ABM) for disrupting the buyer inertia
- Importance of building social proofs for driving conversion through referral/reviews advocacy
- Leveraging technology and advanced sales tools for managing commitment with consistency
- Utilising social media for prospect understanding and research much before beginning the pitch draft
- Mastering the attention-value matrix – planning the sales and marketing strategies as per the expected perception of the value-proposition of the product/ service (Ex- Apple invests minimal in marketing messaging because it ranks higher on the perception of value proposition while a famous fast food chain like McDonald's invests heavily into marketing and sales promotion to launch any new product)



**LEARNING THE ART OF
THINKING SMART**

WELCOMING THE BRAND-NEW SALESPERSON

With the pitch remaining the same, i.e. increasing revenue, reducing cost and increasing market share, the challenge for the new salesperson who had evolved on these principles, was to crack the invisible yet existent line which demarcated the customers from sellers. Internally also, the amalgamation of the sales and marketing teams was the need of the hour.

Idea was to connect with the customer, see the problem and probable solution from their view-point and then co-create the unique solution which brings them value. The customisation strategy was replaced with 'customerisation' – after all, customer had got into the driving seat now.

And that's how the trusted consultant whose aim was to help the customer instead of being focused on just selling his product, emerged from the ashes of traditional salesperson. A consultant who exhibited business acumen, proactively shared innovative ideas beyond the pitch and who sought to collaborate instead of selling the pre-packaged product – the buyer's dream of the ideal sales rep had come true eventually!



**AFTER THE DESCENT
COMES THE RISE**

ANALYSING THE ANATOMY OF THE NEW AVATAR

Few characteristics which defines this new breed of smart sellers:

- Product/ service expertise mapped with the customer business needs
- Compelling storytelling abilities to build upon statistics instead of just relying on them
- Non-negotiable tech-savviness and knowledge of data analysis
- High EQ quotient for finding the differentiating ground in the era of automation
- Focus on the innovative insights instead of blind reliance on relationship-establishment
- Practice of impact communication based on eidetic listening skills
- Effective social media listening for understanding the need and opportunity
- Targeted content marketing for result-oriented and relevant outreach
- Building strong social proofs by proactive seeking of customer referrals
- Practice of ABM (account-based-marketing) tactics in conjunction with the principles of modern-day cerebral selling

TRIVIA

91% of customers are happy to give referrals but only 11% ask for them. 1



**CONNECT, CREATE AND
COLLABORATE – THE NEW
AGE SALESMAN MANTRA**

THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE MOVING WHEEL

The new salesperson sounds perfect for the present times but alas, things are moving constantly, and the screenplay of new-age sales is still in process.

With majority of the sales processes undergoing the automation makeover, let's take a look at the good and the bad of the changing world of sales:

- Videos about product features are increasingly becoming most popular, followed by how-tos and professional reviews. ²
- Despite so much automation, salespeople are spending just one-third of their day actually talking to prospects. They are spending 21% of their day writing emails, 17% entering data, another 17% prospecting and researching leads, 12% going to internal meetings, and 12% scheduling calls. ³
- With technology integration becoming stronger day by day, 1 million B2B salespeople will lose their jobs to self-service e-commerce by 2020. ⁴



THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE MOVING WHEEL

Even on the buyer front, the evolution is in full momentum. Following statistics based on the industry research are the proofs:

- More than half of the buyers now belong to millennial segment with 13% of millennials indicating that they are the final decision-maker on B2B buying decisions and another 28% stating that they are influencing purchase decisions. ^{5 & 6}
- 60% buyers are preferring not to interact with a sales rep as the primary source of information; 68% are preferring to research on their own, online; and 62% say they can now develop selection criteria or finalize a vendor list — based solely on digital content. ⁷
- 9 out of 10 B2B buyers stated that online content has a moderate to major effect on their purchasing decisions. ⁸
- In a typical firm with 100-500 employees, an average of 7 people are getting involved in most buying decisions. ⁹
- Only 2% of cold calls are resulting in an appointment — all the more reason to expand your marketing efforts. ¹⁰
- Email has emerged twice as powerful as cold calling with email marketing yielding 2x higher return on investment (ROI) than cold calling. ¹¹
- Instead of a responsive approach by salespeople, buyers now feel that a proactive, prescriptive approach increase their purchase ease by 86% - the ease which buyers look for. ¹²



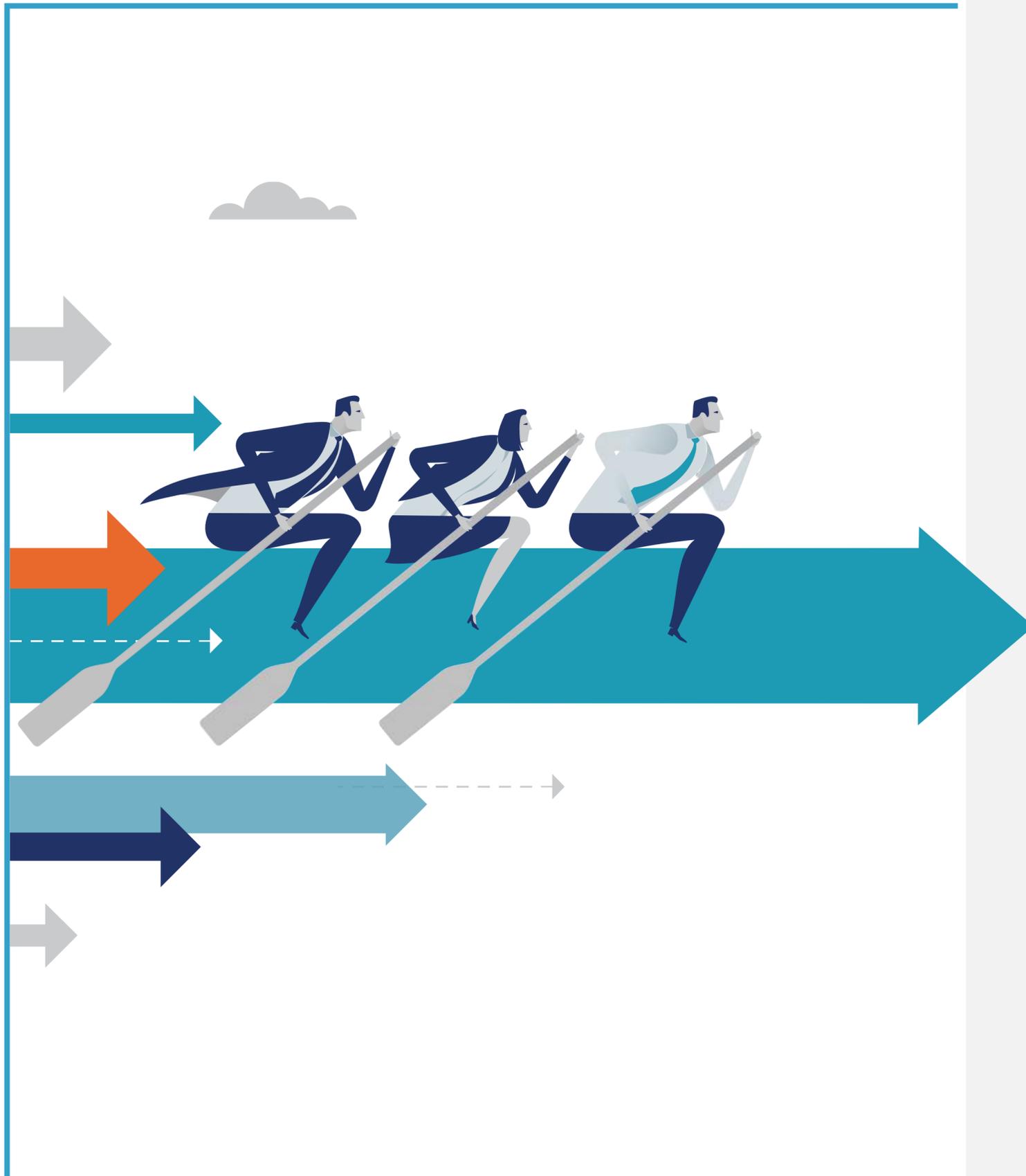
SYNCING STEPS WITH THE CHANGING WINDS

With consultative selling giving way to collaborative selling and intelligence & automation altering the dynamics of the sales world, the winds of change will always keep the salesmen on their toes. The expectation would be a continuous evolution.

Why we say so? These statistics speak the story:

- By 2020, customers will manage **85%** of their relationship with the enterprise without interacting with a human. ¹³
- **80%** of sales and marketing leaders say they already use chatbots for better customer experience or plan to do so by 2020. ¹⁴
- **78%** of brands say they have already implemented or are planning to implement artificial intelligence and virtual reality by 2020 to better serve customers. ¹⁴
- By 2020, a triple-digit growth is expected in areas such as predictive intelligence (118%), lead-to-cash process automation (115%), and artificial intelligence (139%) transforming the sales processes. ¹⁵

With technological advances taking up majority percentage of share in being a decisive factor for making or breaking a deal, the window for the salesman to make a difference will be becoming smaller and smaller, yet more critical than ever.



SYNCING STEPS WITH THE CHANGING WINDS

The push for the evolution can be felt quite strongly even now. Multiple industry researches are pointing in the same direction.

Let's take a look at some figures giving us more insight into this magma of change taking place, right at this moment:

- 79% of business buyers say it's absolutely critical or very important to interact with a salesperson who is a trusted advisor adding value to their business, and not just a sales rep. 15
- 83% of B2B marketers say that social media is the tactic their organizations use for making buying decisions. 16
- 92% senior executives said that social media majorly influenced their purchasing decision. 16
- 72% of the B2B salespeople who use social media reported that they outperformed their sales peers, and more than half of them indicated they closed deals as a direct result of social media. 17
- B2B customers today progress more than 70% of the way through the decision-making process before ever engaging with a sales representative. 18

As the modern-day salesperson is grappling with these changes while leveraging his new-found smartness and tech-savviness to conquer the present-day sales affairs, the shout for a smarter, swifter and more intelligent salesperson is growing louder.



SNEEK-PEEK PREVIEW – SALESPERSON OF THE FUTURE

Today's salesperson comprehends the reality in totality and knows that automation is fast encapsulating most of the tasks which he's doing now.

But the few smart matches of the batch are not getting perturbed by technology replacing their role, rather, they are focusing upon leveraging technology for enhancing their role and becoming indispensable. They are focusing on what technology can't do (paying equal attention to what it is getting really good at) and honing the same as a differentiating skill.

Few characteristics of this new model in the making:

- Believes in selling less and listening more
- Keeps data as the foundation for all strategy and planning
- Continuously hones its tech orientation to stay relevant
- Leverages AI for on-the-job and real-time training
- Breathes analytics and practices faster interpretation of data insights
- Leverages bot communication efficiently to engage with customers and prospects
- Utilises NLP, sensors and machine learning for efficient market research and quicker prospect outreach
- Defines the path of sales innovation instead of depending upon the C-level for the same

This new breed in the incubator understands that much of the value delivery part of sales comes after the sales is closed and hence, will master that post-sales service aspect well. It will also leverage technology to any extent in order to increase the speed of market outreach and sales closure.



**THE FUTURE STARTS
TODAY,
NOT TOMORROW**

FEW BURNING QUESTIONS

While the development seems in-time and on-pace with the speed of change, the challenges will never cease to push the limits further for the salesperson. There are a few question marks which still needs thought-through answers for the sales world to proceed seamlessly into the future.

- How will the salesman thrive and not just survive, with its non-human counterpart, i.e. smart machines?
- Does the era of automation, AI and analytics spell a doom for the human-element which is associated with sales since beginning?
- What will be the source of differentiation for a salesman in the highly competitive and tech-enabled world?



**THE GAME CHANGERS
WILL BE WRITING
THE FUTURE**

With all these seeming impasses, the history has given us enough proofs to believe in the power of human-adaptation and intelligence. Thence, there doesn't seem a reason to believe that the salesman will perish. Instead, what arises is a strong conviction that salesperson of the future will soon emerge – a smarter, faster and more creative architect of ideas and values.

SOURCES

1. <https://thedailysales.net/25-powerful-sales-statistics/>
2. <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/the-changing-face-b2b-marketing/>
3. <https://research.hubspot.com/how-salespeople-learn>
4. http://blogs.forrester.com/andy_hoar/15-04-14-death_of_a_b2b_salesman
5. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/05/22/have-you-adjusted-to-these-three-changes-in-the-b2b-buying-process/#393a64a9c445>
6. <https://www.snapapp.com/blog/millennials-are-here-your-move-b2b-marketers/>
7. <https://go.forrester.com/blogs/the-ways-and-means-of-b2b-buyer-journey-maps-were-going-deep-at-forresters-b2b-forum/>
8. <https://www.cmocouncil.org/thought-leadership/reports/btob-content-impacts-customer-thinking--buying-decisions>
9. https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/1941744/TBIG_Conferences/110_Sales_and_Marketing_statistics.pdf?t=1477662451707
10. <https://business.linkedin.com/sales-solutions/cold-calling-tips/turn-cold-calls-into-warm-calls>
11. <https://www.themarketingblender.com/statistics-every-b2b-company-know-boost-sales/>
12. <https://hbr.org/2017/03/the-new-sales-imperative>
13. https://www.gartner.com/imagesrv/summits/docs/na/customer-360/C360_2011_brochure_FINAL.pdf
14. <https://medium.com/odyns/80-of-businesses-want-chatbots-by-2020-2abe039ca83e>
15. <https://a.sfdcstatic.com/content/dam/www/ocms/assets/pdf/misc/state-of-sales-report-salesforce.pdf>
16. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/03/22/strategic-social-media-is-essential-for-driving-b2b-sales/#530b29bd1db0>
17. <https://hbr.org/2016/11/84-of-b2b-sales-start-with-a-referral-not-a-salesperson>
18. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ryanerskine/2017/12/28/how-to-turn-b2b-buyers-into-sales-leads-according-to-data/#2f3af4525a18>



For more sales insights, visit
www.denave.com/resources

