

Social Selling: The Future of Digital Sales

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YOUR EASY WAY TO SUCCESSFUL SELLING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Chapter One

Why Social Selling is the Most Reliable Way to Increase Sales Leads

Why Social Selling is the Most Reliable Way to Increase Sales Leads

The evolution of social media had a jaw-dropping influence on the B2B buyer's journey. Digital channels play a huge role in buying decisions, with 92% of B2B buying decisions being influenced by digital media in one way or another.

Early adopters of social selling understand the impact that it has on their careers, while companies that insist on sticking with traditional sales channels and methods find themselves struggling to meet their monthly quotas.

Innovation moves fast. While in the late 90s, selling per fax was the way to go, many businesses today don't even have fax machines anymore. Just a few years ago, reaching out to prospects through email would have been seen as a cutting-edge way to grab their attention.Today? It's more likely to land you in their spam inbox than getting in front of your target. Of course, that means that social selling - today's shiny toy - will be overtaken by something else at some point. Already today, 'digital sales' is talked about.

But in the meantime, social selling remains the present and future. It's the most reliable way to increase sales leads and develop real, meaningful relationships with prospects.

Here at SocialSellinator, we've built our business around social selling and we strategically use it to help our clients re-shape the way they conduct sales. Some of the reasons why we believe in social selling so strongly include:

More Social Selling Means More Opportunities

The proof is in the pudding. Social sellers engage with more people within their target market. As a result, they are able to attract 45% more opportunities, according to a recent study from LinkedIn. That's something that every business could benefit from.

Social selling is all about building connections with your audience before the selling process starts. That way, when the selling process commences in earnest, there is already familiarity and understanding there. Your prospects already know that they can come to you for information about your product, industry, or other related topics. The sales conversation is more of a formality when it takes place in that context.

Build Better, More Meaningful Relationships

Genuinely engaging with prospects before trying to sell them anything will lead to stronger, more genuine relationships. Right?

That's exactly what social selling does. 31% of B2B professionals said in a recent survey that social selling allowed them to build deeper relationships with their clients.

Through genuine engagement, you learn about their hobbies, interests, and professional experience. You might learn more about what college they attended. When sales conversations do start, you can speak to how your solution will help them from a place of true understanding – rather than using sales tricks to learn more and guide the conversation. Don't try people to sell what you have - sell them what they need.

Decision-Makers Leverage Social Media

Decision makers and C-level executives use social media to research options and make purchasing decisions. In fact, a study from Bambu recently found that 84% of C-level executives leveraged social media in their B2B purchasing processes.

In sales, your goal should always be to meet your audience where they already are. In this case, your audience is already using social media to learn more about the products and services they invest in.

B2B Buyers Prefer to Engage Through Social

Companies should embrace social selling not just because it is more effective, but because it's the medium where their buyers prefer to engage with them. 92% of B2B buyers use social media platforms specifically to engage with thought leaders in their industry. 33% of users prefer to contact brands through social media rather than making a phone call.

Increase Sales Leads Reliably

Social selling helps companies to increase their sales leads but also increases the quality of the leads generated as well. Embracing social selling allows sales reps to go into sales conversations with a better understanding of their prospects and a foundation for their relationship in place. By embracing social selling early, you'll position yourself at the forefront of a burgeoning industry that will one day be accepted as the most effective way to engage in B2B sales.

Chapter Two

Social Selling Automation: 10 Tools That Make You Successful in Less Time

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Do you find that you are dedicating a lot of time to mundane, manual tasks when it comes to social selling? Do you wish that you had some tools that could help you to spend more time focusing on the big-picture and less time wading into data entry?

Social selling is a long-term strategy that requires some commitment before results show and you'll be able to realize ROI. On the plus side, once you have the system running, it's the gift that keeps on giving! There are many daily social selling tasks that on their own don't produce massive results. But in combination, they help you grow your reputation, establish relationships with your ideal customers, and establish your brand as an authority within your industry.

To get to that point, there are many different tasks that you have to complete on a regular basis to grow your following and establish a high level of awareness with your target audience. While it is possible to conduct all of these tasks by hand, this can be a time-consuming prospect. Instead, you should leverage tools that let you automate some of these tasks and free you up to engage in higher level actions that push your growth forward.

In this article, we'll outline some of the best social selling automation tools that are available today. These tools will not only help you to jump-start your social selling strategies and make you successful in less time, but they will help you to identify more opportunities in general. It's impossible to monitor everything happening on social media as it relates to your industry. Using tools can help you to keep a closer eye on the discussions that are happening among your customers and influencers within your industry.

If you are looking to bolster your social selling strategies and create more opportunities, automating certain aspects of your social selling strategies is a must. With that said, let's dive right in and explore some of these amazing helpers!

#1 Prospecting: LinkedIn Sales Navigator

One of the most important tasks of any social seller to identify new prospects and engage with them on their favorite platforms. For B2B companies, that usually means (or at least involves) LinkedIn. LinkedIn is the world's largest professional social network with nearly 600 million users. That's a lot of opportunity. But it can be tough to sift through. While LinkedIn's standard search features are solid, LinkedIn Sales Navigator puts them on steroids and adds more options, ensuring that you are able to identify the perfect targets for your business.

LinkedIn Sales Navigator helps you to target the right people and companies and better understand their desires and needs. Then, using the InMail credits that they provide (among other features), the subscription helps you engage with those prospects. Sales Navigator provides lead recommendations to help you quickly discover the decisionmakers at your target accounts. It integrates directly with your CRM and transfers all prospect data, so you have it on hand in a single click.

#2 LinkedIn Automation: Orca

Orca is amazing and makes for the perfect complementary investment to LinkedIn Sales Navigator. The tool is built for social selling automation, handling some of the most important social selling tasks so you can focus on revenue-boosting actions. An investment in Orca is an investment into your own time.

Orca is designed to help you scale social outreach on LinkedIn in a genuine way while scaling your operations. Their system is designed to help you create conversations with your prospects prior to engaging with them for business. You can automate and sequence a number of different tasks through the platform:

- LinkedIn profile visits (show up in your prospect's visitors list)
- Connection requests
- Connect messages
- Follow-up messages

This is extremely powerful. These are the most important LinkedIn tasks for social selling and being able to free up your time lets you focus on quality engagement with your prospects and driving personal conversations. Orca's simple drag-and-drop interface makes it a great choice for teams, who will require minimal training to use the platform. If you want to make LinkedIn a key component of your social selling strategy, Orca is one of the best tools you can pick.

#3 Content Sharing: rFactr

Providing your following with a consistent stream of high-value content is a critical component of social selling. However, constantly working to identify great content that will appeal to your ideal customers can be difficult. Content curation isn't as easy as it looks at face value. rFactr's product, SocialPort, combines a number of useful features that you can use to drive your social selling strategies on the most popular platforms.

First, their CRM features. This software offers deep integration with the biggest CRM platforms. Through their system, you can add leads to your CRM, attribute revenue, track social sales activities, and sync your tasks with the people that you connect with. Then, the software helps you to identify content that will be a good fit for your audience through their customer recommendations. Last, you can schedule syndication of that content on all of your social media platforms.

rFactr's more advanced plan, SocialPort Enterprise, also includes features like prospect tracking, competitor tracking, and training modules for your teams. SocialPort is an excellent tool for social sellers and a complement to sales teams that utilize social selling strategies.

#4 Social Post Scheduling: Buffer

In social selling it's extremely important that you are always sharing new information with your audience. You want a constant stream of insights, useful content, interesting thoughts, and general engagement coming from your account. However, nobody will be able to log into their accounts each day, identify things that you would like to share (that will actually be effective with your audience), and keep up with the fast-moving world of social media. Some automation is required to help keep your accounts active.

Buffer is the simplest solution out there today. Their software allows you to schedule your content and track the effectiveness of everything that you share across all of the popular social networks. Additionally, their system makes content recommendations based on RSS feeds and other content that you have shared, giving you a built-in resource for content curation. Buffer lets you schedule your post for an exact date and time, then Buffer will automatically publish and track the post for you. All of your posting can be handled in one place, with manualupdates sprinkled in. Just because you use automation tools, doesn't mean that your content stream should look robotic!

#5 Relationship Intelligence: Nudge.ai

Nudge.ai is a platform that helps social sellers build relationships with their target audience. Sales has always been about building trust, and Nudge uses that premise as the foundation for its product. The software offers some basic categories, each incredibly important to social selling:

- **Analytics**. Relationship intelligence for social sellers. Includes automated CRM activity logging with no manual input required. Also includes buying committee coverage analytics which is incredibly valuable to account-based sales teams.
- **Insights.** Nudge's system systematically facilitates warm introductions through your network. Their system will keep you on top of your relationships by alerting you to new connections, providing notifications for required follow-ups, and integrating directly with LinkedIn messages, Gmail, and Outlook to ensure that no conversations or relationships are neglected.

Nudge.ai simplifies the social selling process by ensuring that you have all of your conversations and contacts across multiple platforms, accessible from one place. They pull all of your contact information from your email, phone, meetings, sales, and CRM into one database so that you can keep a bird's eye view of your social selling operations. Then, their system reminds you to follow-up with your prospects with smart reminders.

#6 Social CRM: Nimble

Nimble is one part data repository and one part CRM for social sellers. Their system enables you to access up-to-date social media profile information, business data, and verified contact data that helps you to get into contact with the prospects that you discover.

When you install the Nimble CRM, any time that you visit a social media profile, their system populates a sidebar with all of their relevant information including their other social media accounts, email, details that are publicly available about that person, and other pertinent information that you can use to engage with them.

Nimble also offers advanced social selling features like pipeline management, sales forecasting, analytics, and intelligent email tracking. Their system integrates directly with Office 365 and G Suite, ensuring that all of your communications with prospects are tracked and taken into account when sending follow-ups or designing strategies.

#7 Social Listening: Meltwater

A big component of social selling is being able to identify trends as they develop and jump into conversations as they begin to unfold. This helps you get in front of your audience and position yourself at the forefront of your industry's most popular conversations and topics. If you wait too long to jump in, the conversation can pass you by and it can become difficult to gain traction in these conversations, resulting in missed opportunities.

Meltwater aims to solve this problem. Their platform leverages local content partnerships and uses AI to sift through billions of documents in real-time. They cut through the noise and provide you with actionable recommendations for identifying trends, jumping into conversations early in their time trending and it ensures that you position yourself appropriately within the conversation.

Meltwater can also help you monitor your brand across all social and digital channels from one convenient dashboard. Keep an eye on what your ideal audience is talking about across the world. News scanning isn't just limited to social media either – Meltwater monitors conversations on niche forums and discussion boards around the web so that you never miss an opportunity to engage.

#8 Twitter Analytics: FollowerWonk

Twitter is a great platform for distributing content and getting in front of your ideal audience, but its minimalist profile can make it difficult to learn more about your audience. Obviously not ideal, since you want toengage with them. Followerwonk helps you dig deeper into your following and better understand your audience with their in-depth Twitter analytics. This tool can help you to find, analyze, and optimize your social selling strategies for growth.

Followerwonk stands out from the competition with their actionable visualizations that compare your social following to that of other influencers within your niche. Then, the software generates detailed analytics and reports that can easily be shared within your company with the click of a button.

If you want to leverage Twitter in your social selling strategy but are having a difficult time understanding your following and measuring your impact, Followerwonk is the perfect choice of tool.

#9 Email Identification: Hunter

Expanding the number of channels that you engage with prospects through is critical in social selling. You want to take that short Twitter conversation and turn it into a warm relationship that spans social networks and email and blossoms into a valuable relationship asset over time.

However, sometimes, it's just about impossible to identify a prospect's email on your own. Sure, you could ask them for it. Or use some Google magic to find where it is listed online, but that is time-consuming and tedious.

Instead, use Hunter! This tool scrapes the web and identifies email addresses of your prospects. Using a Google Chrome extension, you can quickly identify the email of prospects and extend your relationship to a new channel. If Hunter can't find their email, it analyzes other email addresses on the domain to give you a good shot at guessing what their email might be based on the format used with other email addresses.

#10 Custom Codeless Automation: Zapier

Zapier is a platform that is designed to extend the functionality of your apps by connecting them to other apps. By doing this, it lets you create and automate workflows between different softwares, which is extremely valuable for social sellers. You can create workflows with nearly any popular app and tie actions to actions in another app.

For instance – let's say you want to store every incoming email to your sales team in a Google Sheet. Zapier could be used to automatically detect incoming emails and enter data on a specific Google Sheet for you, eliminating manual data entry for that task.

That's just one example. Zapier offers connections between more than 1,000 apps at this time, making it easy for you to identify and automate workflows that take up hours of your time each and every week.

Social Selling Automation Makes You More Effective

Smart social selling automation frees up your time to focus on more important tasks, puts you in a position to identify new opportunities, and helps you to build more relationships with prospects more quickly than you would by hand. The tools mentioned in this article are some of the best tools available today for the different tasks that we have outlined in the article and some combination of these tools would be an excellent investment for any social seller.

Chapter Three

Stages of a Social Media Marketing Funnel

3 Steps to Identify Share-Worthy Blog Topics

It would be nice if B2B customers showed up fully-informed and ready to buy. Most of the time, that simply isn't the case. Customers require some nurturing and education on their way to making a big investment in their business in buying your product or services.

The process of walking the customer through that nurturing process takes place during what is known as a "sales funnel." A sales funnel is the way that customers move through the process of becoming aware of your product, to ultimately buying it. These funnels cover a wide range of conversations, channels, and metrics that you use to evaluate how efficiently you walk customers through that process. According to Salesforce, 68% of companies have not identified or attempted to measure their sales funnel.

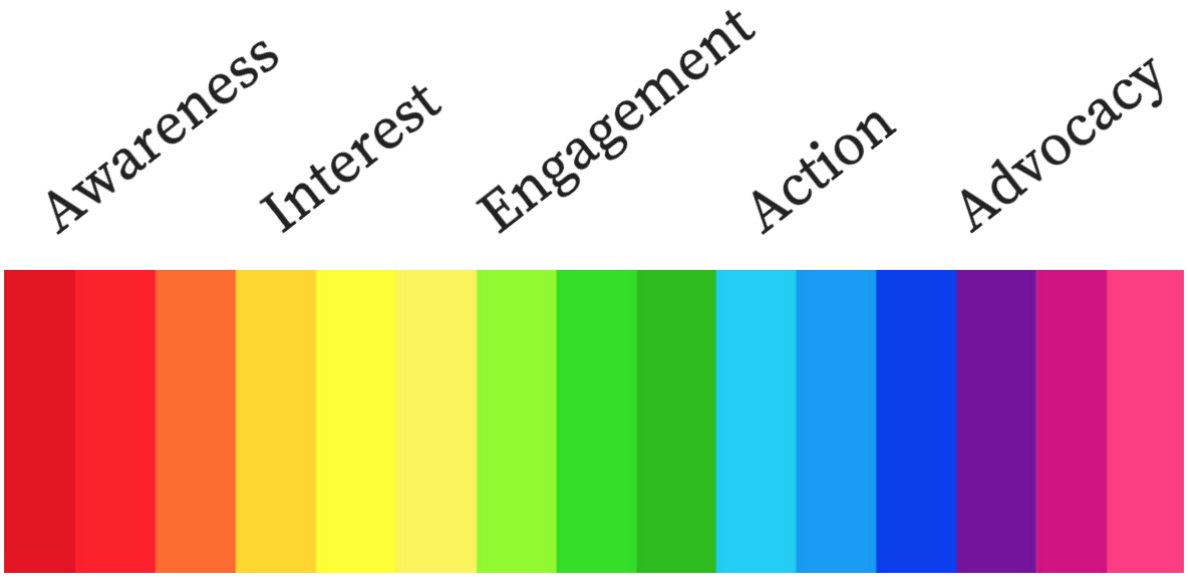
But – social media doesn't exactly lend itself well to a traditional sales funnel. The process of engaging with prospects is different than it would be if they found you through a Google search or advertisement. While the "social media marketing funnel" does share similarities to a traditional funnel, there are some key differences:

What Does a Traditional Sales Funnel Look Like?

Traditional sales funnels all have the same basic set of steps and flow. While the actual actions may differ slightly from one company to another, they still walk the prospect through a series of steps that lead toward them not only purchasing your product but becoming an advocate of your solution:

- Awareness
- Interest
- Engagement
- Action
- Advocacy

Here's a visualization of the process:

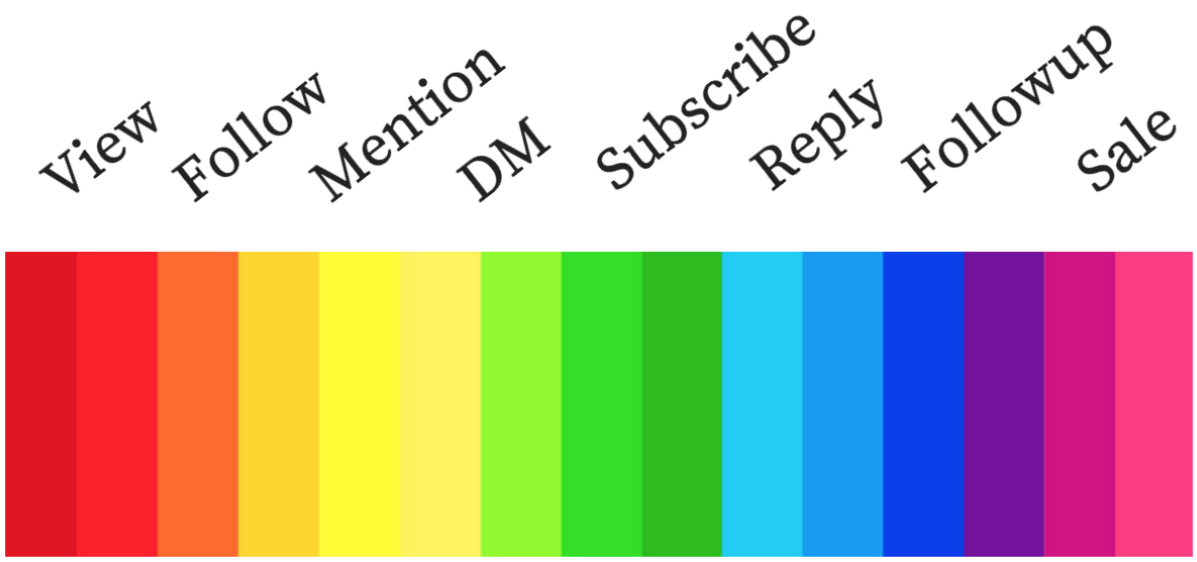


No matter what kind of product you are offering or what tasks are included in this process, the same basic formula applies to nearly every transaction you make. Prospects learn about your solution, develop an interest, engage with your brand, and buy your product. In addition, consulting companies like McKinsey have developed more refined approaches to the traditional funnel. In particular, I like the consumer decision journey by David Court, Dave Elzinga, Susan Mulder, and Ole Jørgen Vetvik, which is less linear and more complex. It reflects a multiude of influences and decision-points that a buyer/prospect is exposed to.

How Can That Be Applied to Social Media?

When it comes to a social media marketing funnel, the actual stages don't change. However, the tasks associated with a social media marketing funnel will be unique to that channel, and may even have differences based on the platform that you are using.

Here is an example of how you can fill out a social media marketing funnel with tasks that align closely with a traditional sales funnel:



As you can see, this social media marketing funnel applies specific actions to different stages of the funnel. In the beginning, when prospects are building awareness of your product, they view and follow your business on social media. That eventually leads to more overt engagement in the way of mentions and direct messages. It shows how persistence throughout the process of familiarizing yourself with a prospect pays off. 44% of salespeople give up after just one rejection, but success in social selling relies on a constant stream of interactions to build familiarity. Giving up after just one rejection would result in a lot of lost sales for most successful social sellers.

The conversations help to set the stage of the sale and nurture your prospects through the buying process while they develop familiarity with your company and product. A 2018 survey by Hubspot revealed that only 69% of marketers feel their top priority should be converting leads into customers.

Keep it Natural with Social Selling

At its core, social selling attempts to simulate a traditional sales funnel in a social media setting. The process of building awareness, then engaging with and educating prospects are core to the prime tenants of effective social selling strategy.

Social media selling relies on a more natural, conversational process than developing sales through other channels. By mirroring a traditional sales funnel and mapping out the different tasks and associated with each phase, you can help yourself to better understand your own selling processes and

Chapter Four

4 Critical Principles of Effective B2B Social Selling

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Making meaningful headway with social selling is part science and part art form. Most that attempt to sell socially, fail. The dismal success rate that most experience would make you believe that social selling is hard – but in truth, the opposite is true. Social selling is incredibly simple, so long as you are committed to making it work. Most social sellers fail for many reasons, but chief among them is a lack of consistency and an inability to follow the critical principles that lead to social selling success.

For all of the blog posts, podcasts, webinars, and videos covering advanced social selling tips and tricks, being successful in social selling is actually a very simple process. By adhering to some basic principles, success is almost guaranteed in the long-term.

The principles that every social seller should follow include:

Identify and Purposefully Engage with Prospects

It may sound basic, but you wouldn't believe how many people come to us having tried their hand at "social selling" without actually identifying a list of people that they want to sell to. That's the first thing that any social seller should do!

But, you can't just make a list of prospects and expect magic to happen. You have to purposefully engage with them as well. This includes both more overt communications like responding to their posts and joining conversations they participate in and less over micro-engagements such as liking their content or engaging with people in their peripheral. When your prospects see you adding value and engaging with people throughout their industry, you do a lot to establish yourself as a person to pay attention to.

Choose the Right Platform and Tools

Choosing the right platform(s) for your audience is so critical. Sometimes, you may want to be active on more than a single platform if you have the bandwidth for it. Either way, knowing where to find your audience and being able to identify the platform that will give you the best chance of success is critical.

Then you need the right tools, and the platform you choose will affect the tools that you use. Choosing tools that will facilitate and complement your strategy is so important because it sets the stage for you to focus on refining that strategy. If you are going to employ strategies that rely on automation and tools – you can't truly begin testing things until you've pinned down the platform and tools that you will use. As you expand your strategy, new tools will have to be integrated.

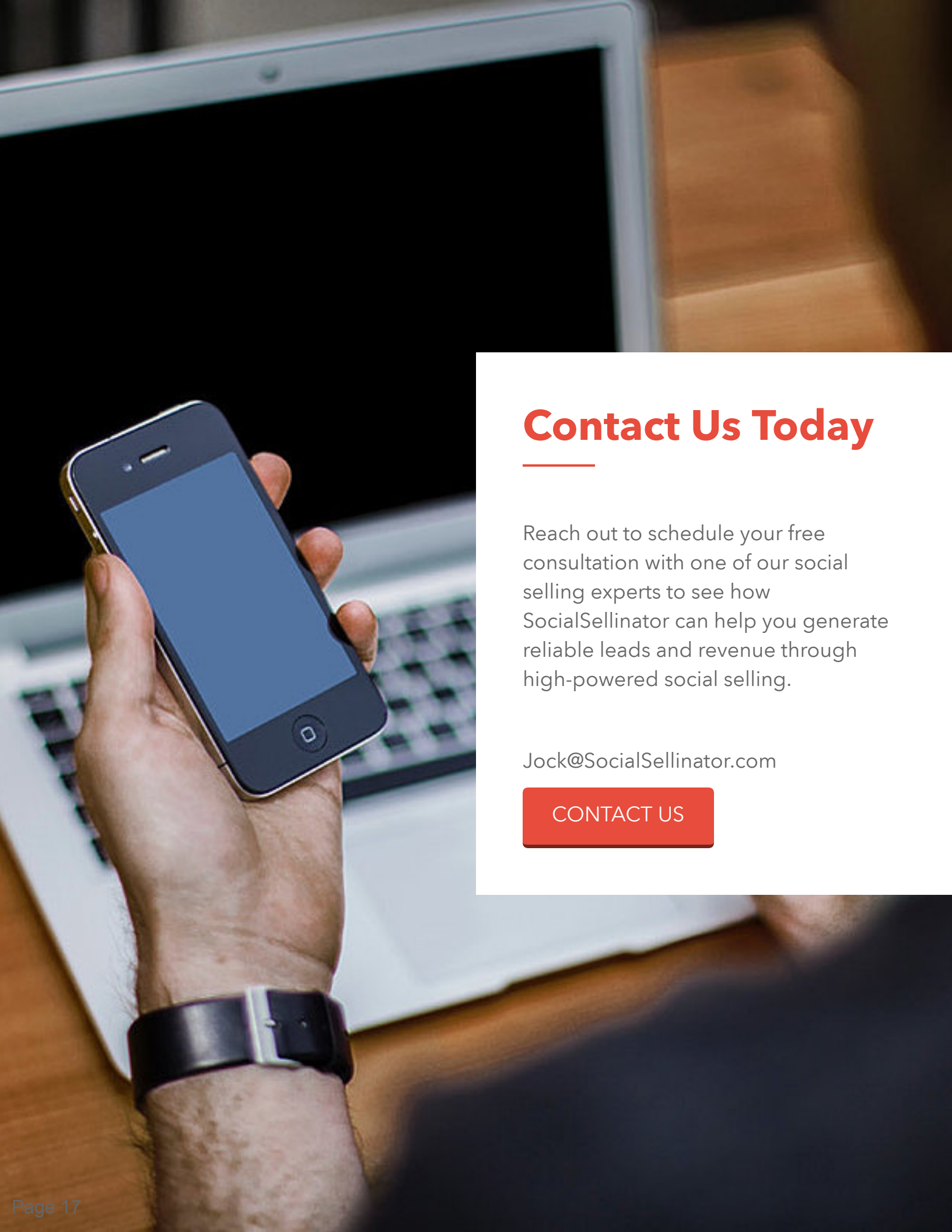
Mix In Automation Intelligently

For social selling to be successful, you can't rely solely on automation. You have to engage in genuine, unplanned conversations with your prospects to get anywhere. Still, automation has its place. You want to stay top-of-mind even when you're not directly engaging with your prospects. That requires that you have a consistent presence on social platforms, delivering value and helpful content.

Finding that sweet spot can be tough. There are definitely ways to be too heavy handed with automation. Likewise, you can automate too little, keeping you from making the most of the manual interactions you take part in.

Track and Analyze Your Results to Improve

Another critical but often overlooked principle. Like in any form of digital marketing you have to optimize your strategies for success. You can follow all of the tips you want, but if you aren't actively tracking what is working then you are going into every new engagement with a prospect blind. This relies heavily on having the right tools, as we discussed in a previous step. But it is so important to analyze the steps that you take and determine what works for you.



Contact Us Today

Reach out to schedule your free consultation with one of our social selling experts to see how SocialSellinator can help you generate reliable leads and revenue through high-powered social selling.

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CONTACT US