

# The Social Sales Revolution

**7** steps to get ahead

salesforce



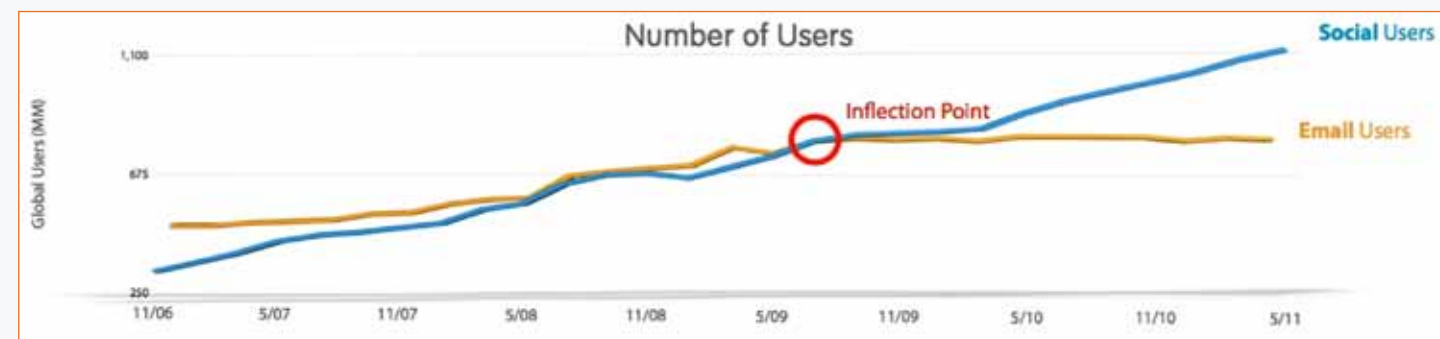
# Introduction

## We are in the middle of a social revolution.

A new age of the social customer has arrived, marked by an ever-expanding stream of blog posts, status alerts, tweets, and “likes.” Social networking users have surpassed email users, and 22 percent of time spent online is on social media sites. This new order has radical implications for salespeople. The power once held by the sales rep as the keeper of expert knowledge is shifting to the customer. The customer is now in the driver’s seat, with everything from pricing to product information available in real time from trusted social connections.

But sales reps are also better off. The same social revolution that is empowering buyers is providing salespeople with an unprecedented supply of sales intelligence as well as with tools to strengthen and extend their connections. According to a study by Cone Inc., 56 percent of U.S. consumers feel both a stronger connection with and better served by companies when they can interact with them in a social media environment. Sales reps who adopt social technologies say they enjoy greater reach, higher productivity, more meaningful relationships, and inevitably, they sell more.

This eBook examines how some of today’s most successful reps approach social sales. Among others, you’ll meet a wine salesman with almost a million Twitter followers, a global manufacturer who is taking orders on



**56% of buyers feel stronger connections to brands that engage them on social media.**

Facebook, and a storage saleswoman who used Twitter and other tools to exceed her quota by 200 percent. We’ll discuss the role of social media mainstays like blogs, Facebook, forums, LinkedIn, and Twitter along with tools for collaboration on private employee social networks. And we’ll look ahead to highly networked sales channels and rich customer databases—complete with social insights—that we believe will become the norm in the near future.



# 1 Get in the Game

## If there is a single gripe common to customers everywhere,

it is that sales reps don't take the time to find out what they need before launching into a pitch. During IDC's recent "The Buyer Speaks" survey, which included 339 IT buyers, nearly three-quarters of respondents complained that sales reps didn't know enough about their companies or their industries to be effective.

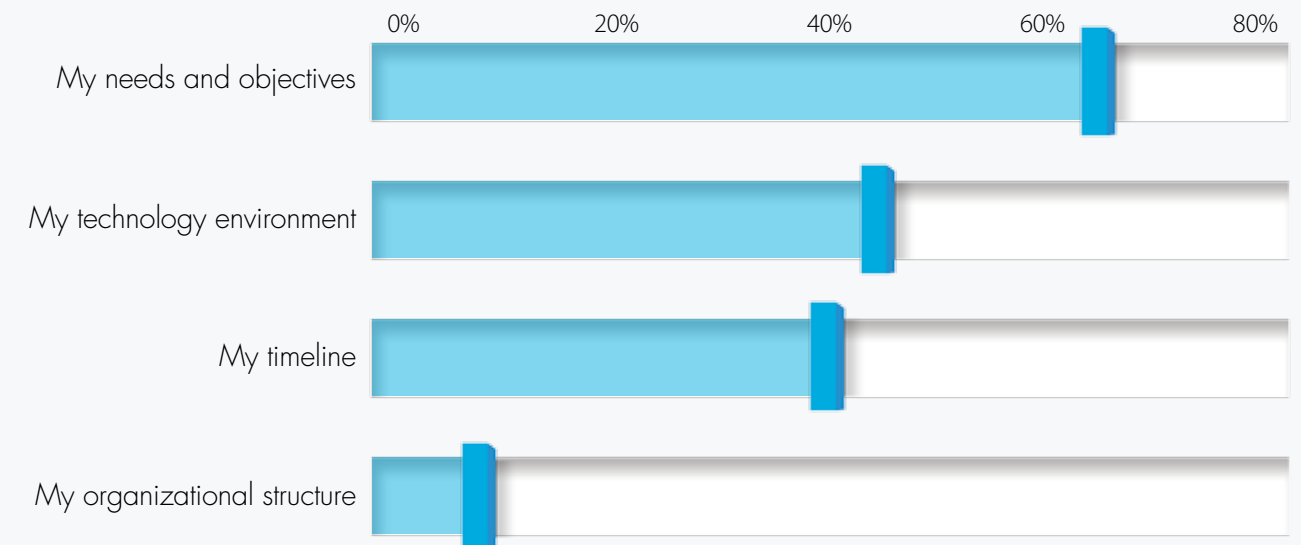
### Luckily, social media is here to help.

Research used to be the loneliest stage of selling. You'd go to a prospect's website, read the marketing materials, and try to incorporate the nuggets you found into a PowerPoint. If you had a sales content or CRM system, you'd log in and hope to emerge before lunch with a scrap of data to help shape your game plan. Overachievers might dial up a prospect's customers, competitors, or vendors. But realistically, most salespeople only had time to shout over to the next cube.

Social sales is not only more fun, it's much more productive. Instead of cold-calling a list of outdated leads with a generic sales pitch, you can identify the members of a decision-making team and reach out to them with a custom proposal tailored to their particular business goals. Rather than digging through old emails in search of everything from product specs to winning presentations, you can log into an internal collaboration tool and find everything at your fingertips.

**Quick tip #1: Put yourself in your customer's shoes. Where would you go to learn about your products or services?**

## Salespeople should know more about:



## 75% of IT buyers said sales don't know enough about their industry.

Get in the Game

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Know Your Customers' Hangouts

2

Make Yourself "Like"-able

3

First Friends, Then Leads

4

Connect with Social Intelligence

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Tweet-up Your Pipeline

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Get Together, Sell Smarter

7



# 2 Know Your Customers' Hangouts

## The first step toward social sales success

is to figure out where your customers—and potential customers—are engaging across the social Web. Different industries tend to congregate in different areas of the Web. According to IDC's "2011 Buyer Experience" survey, independent blogs and communities are most valued by IT buyers, followed by vendor blogs and communities. So ask around, read industry blogs and their comments, and search on key industry terms on both general and site-specific search engines. You'll quickly identify business and industry-friendly watering holes where you can begin to quench your thirst for knowledge.

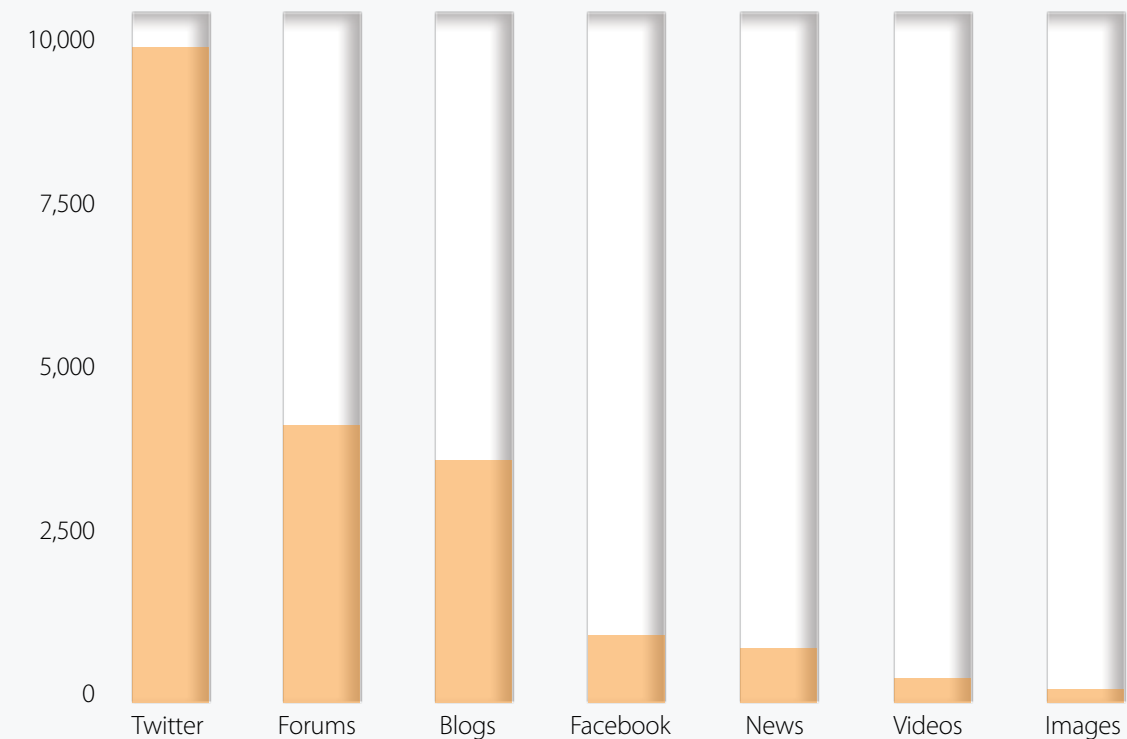
### When "trust" translates to "ROI"

Adam Hansen, marketing coordinator of Rackspace, an IT hosting company headquartered in San Antonio, TX, wanted to engage with Rackspace's core audience of IT managers and directors at small to mid-sized companies—generally with 40 employees or less—during spring 2009. He found more than a million of them at Spiceworks, an online community that centered around a popular network management tool of the same name.

Hansen started participating in the community, answering questions, initiating discussion threads, and providing technical white papers. He didn't act like a salesperson, and he wasn't treated like one. "The community was very trusting," he said. Hansen decided to try his first promotion—a 10 percent discount off Rackspace's hosted email service just for Spiceworks members. It was so popular, Rackspace recouped its initial investment in only 2 months.



Rackspace social channels by volume of posts



**He didn't act like a salesperson, and he wasn't treated like one.**

As ROI from email continued to grow, Rackspace added another product, a cloud server. Even though Rackspace spent nothing on marketing, the Spiceworks community bought the same number of cloud servers in 2½ months that the nine-member sales team was selling in 1 month. "It took a little longer, but we didn't have to pay salaries or benefits," Hansen said.

An analysis of customers acquired through Spiceworks revealed other advantages. Not only were customer acquisition costs much lower, but Spiceworks customers provided higher recurring revenue—they bought more products from Rackspace over time.

**Quick tip #2: Tune into customers' conversations. Join groups and forums and set up Google alerts.**

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# 3 Make Yourself “Like”-able

## It’s not who you know, it’s who knows you.

That maxim from the traditional world of face-to-face sales also holds true on the new social frontier. If you build a brand for yourself, new business will find you.

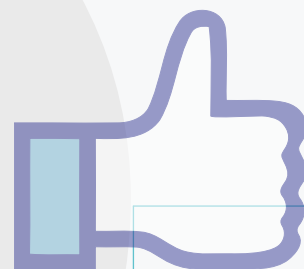
But how do you create a personal brand for the digital world? It’s important to remember your online brand is everything you’ve accomplished in the non-social world, plus all your tweets, blog posts, comments, status updates, videos, photographs, website, etc. In sum, how you participate and position yourself will determine the level of your success. You can control whether you become an expert in a close-knit industry, a Twitter superstar with millions of followers—or remain invisible.

### Talking wine until 3 a.m.

When Gary Vaynerchuk filmed his first “Wine Library” episode in February 2006, he promised to keep it “silly and fun.” Production values were low. His hair was uncombed, and his only prop was a black plastic spitbucket. He hardly seemed ready for prime time.

Now 5½ years later, Vaynerchuk is a media star and the author of two best-selling books. He’s been invited to appear with TV personalities like Ellen DeGeneres and Conan O’Brien. His 900,000 followers on Twitter are affectionately known as “Vayniacs.”

“Thanks to the accessibility and reach of social media, and the zero cost, anyone can do this,” Vaynerchuk writes in his book, *Why Now is the Time to Crush It!: Cash in on Your Passion*. He describes a simple brand-building process



based on his own experience. Buy a domain name (yours, if possible), he suggests, then start a blog, create a Facebook fan page, open a Twitter account, and begin creating your own content. Once you’ve established a presence, start listening and commenting. In other words, be social.

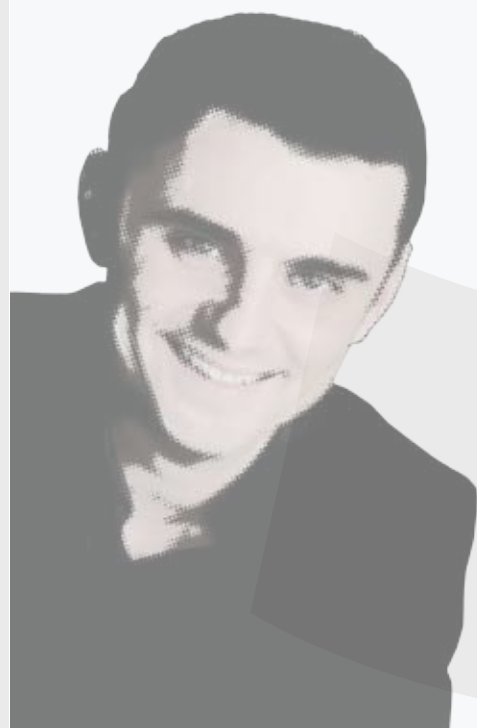
“Every night, after taping an episode of my show, I’d spend the next 8 or 9 hours in the Internet wine trenches, digging up as much information as possible about who was talking about wine and wine-related subjects,” he recalled. “And then I’d start reaching out.”

Vaynerchuk’s irreverent commentary on wine and his high level of social engagement quickly made him an Internet sensation. As his popularity grew, so did sales at his wine store.

**Quick tip #3: Polish up your profiles on social networking sites. Connect to everyone you know, and join relevant industry groups.**



## “Anyone can do this!”



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# 4 First Friends, Then Leads

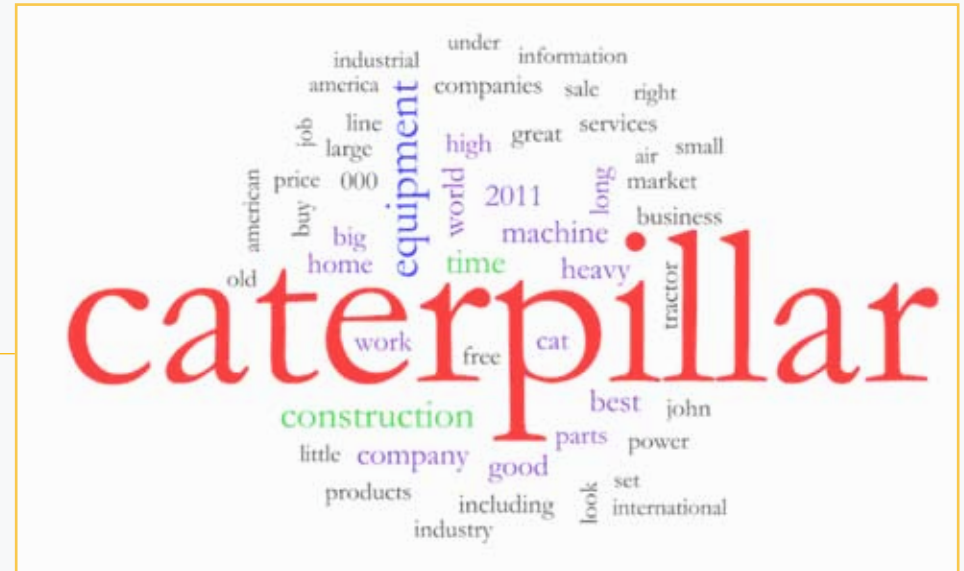
## Whether you find your customers

in an industry forum, on a Facebook fan page, or in a community sponsored by your company, traditional rules of etiquette apply. Generally, online gatherings aren't the appropriate place for a hard sell, especially if they're being hosted by your company. Instead, you want to understand why customers and prospects are there and help them find what they're looking for. If they're on your site, you want to roll out the red carpet and use each visit as an opportunity to showcase the value and great service you deliver to customers.

### Caterpillar digs the social Web

Caterpillar, the world's #1 manufacturer of construction and mining equipment, didn't set out to be a poster company for social sales. When the Peoria, IL-based company launched a Facebook page, a Twitter stream, and blog communities starting in 2008, Caterpillar primarily sought to provide thought leadership.

The company's first blog, a community centered on electric power generation, quickly became a hub for discussion of technical topics like generator set enclosures. These structures, which often house emergency standby generators, were the subject of a 3-day symposium conducted on the blog in May 2011. Participants in the online event discussed everything from product features and specification trends to sound level requirements and specific regional needs. The symposium attracted more than 2,000 users and drew attention



## 2,000 users attended the 3-day online event.

from throughout the industry, according to Brian Stokoe, Caterpillar's social media program manager.

Even though Caterpillar's online communities weren't built to fill a sales pipeline, the leads have flowed in. Stokoe cites his favorite: a message that appeared on Caterpillar's Facebook page in April 2011. "We are looking for 740 dump trucks in Europe for rent," the message stated. "If anyone can supply, please kindly contact me. We need 49 units for 6 months rent!! Waiting."

The customer didn't have to wait long. A member of Caterpillar's social media team spotted the comment and reached out to the dealer in Poland. By the close of the next European business day, the deal was done.

**Quick tip #4: Answer your customer's questions before you pitch an idea.**

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# 5 Connect with Social Intelligence

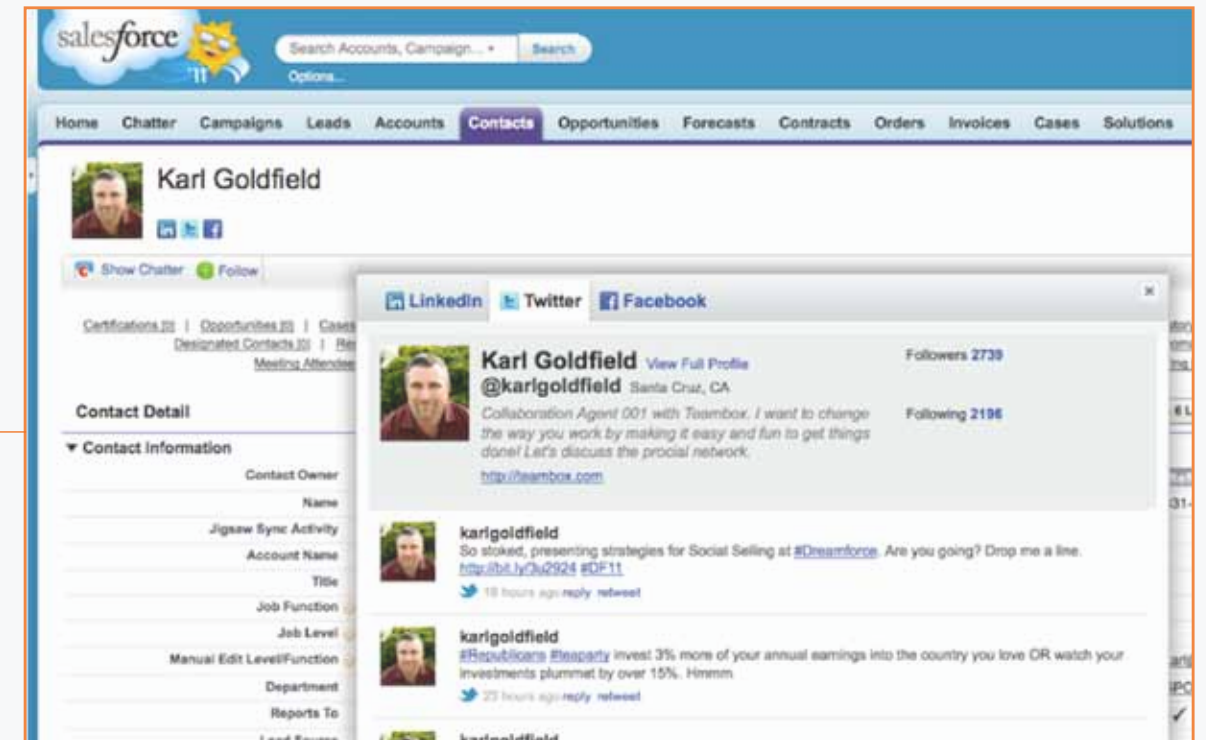
## Not long ago, the only employee names publically available

at a company were its top executives. Salespeople who needed to go deeper had to hunt for contacts, and inaccurate CRM data was one of the biggest obstacles to a sale. That situation began to change when professionals started voluntarily adding their profiles to LinkedIn in 2003. It shifted even more dramatically when tools emerged a few years later to aggregate information posted on different social networks. It's now possible for a good salesperson to determine how to best approach a prospect and know where they are in the buying process. This insight translates directly into greater sales success. According to CSO Insights, sales intelligence increases win rates by 17 percent. And social networks are the best new source of sales intelligence.

### Crushing a quote with LinkedIn

Karl Goldfield was among the first salespeople to tap the power of LinkedIn. In 2003, Goldfield was working in enterprise sales at SurfControl, a company that sold email filtering, website filtering, and desktop security software. LinkedIn had just launched. "I got connected with someone on LinkedIn, and I quickly realized it would be great for salespeople. You could find basic information about people before you placed a call, and as people got more connected, you could also see the relationships they had."

LinkedIn became one of Goldfield's favorite sources of sales intelligence. "I had to sell \$5 million in email filtering software to an industry that didn't know it needed email filtering software," he recalled. "I really had to be



prepared for each call." His secret weapon: looking up prospects on LinkedIn.

**“I could tailor the relationship to what was important to them.”**

By checking LinkedIn and other, newer social networking sites, Goldfield could tell if an executive was interested in technical details, if he or she cared about being on the cutting edge, or if security was a major concern. "By knowing their mindset, I could tailor the relationship to what was important to them," he said.

Now head of the sales consultancy StartUp Sales Mentor, Goldfield makes sure his clients master the latest social tools. "If we understand what drives people to buy, we can study that online behavior and determine who is ready to make a purchase," he said. "For a sales representative, this approach means more time to spend with real prospects and quicker conversion to opportunities."

**Quick tip #5: Listen for the point of need and learn from a customer's social behavior.**

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# 6 Tweet-up Your Pipeline

## The first impulse of many salespeople

after they start using social networks for sales is to look for leads or ask for a connection to a lead. It's a common approach, but it's not the most effective way to fill your pipeline. As sales guru Jeffrey Gitomer writes in his book, *Social Boom! How to Master Business Social Media*, social sales is less about traditional selling and more about attracting people who want to buy. In other words, salespeople have to take a long-term approach. Gitomer recommends setting aside an hour a day to nurture online networks. Expect much of that work to be listening.

That listening can pay off. In 2009, IBM assigned employees to identify social conversations that had to do with topics like replacing a server, purchasing a storage system, or issuing an RFP. The program, dubbed, "Listening for Leads," brought in millions of dollars in new business.

### A top saleswoman who tweets

The first time Christina Weil was mentioned on Twitter, she was working in Louisiana, selling storage solutions for a global tech company, and it caught her by surprise. Weil initially felt silly, but a colleague advised her to jump in and join the conversation.

Weil took the advice to heart and spent the weekend building her Twitter network. She became an avid user, not only of Twitter but of other social channels. Whenever she met with customers, she'd get their social contact information. Even C-level executives began friending her on Facebook.



Within a few months, one of the first prospects Weil had connected with on Twitter told her he was doing a "tech refresh" and invited her to present to his company. It was the first of many doors that began opening

**“People began to see me as a consultant, instead of a salesperson.”**

as a result of Weil's social activity. "I always shared unbiased technical information," she said. "People began to see me as a consultant, instead of just a salesperson." Weil didn't push products—she didn't have to.

Weil's reputation grew, and so did her sales. Within 2 years, she was named one of the top salespeople in the Southeast territory. She had exceeded her quota by 200 percent. Although her social activity doesn't replace traditional face-to-face selling—she still meets regularly with engineers, network admins, and other decision makers—Weil believes it gives her an edge. "Social media let me quickly establish the credibility and trust you need to build meaningful relationships," she said.

**Quick tip #6: Post on social media sites at least twice a week. Be yourself.**

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# Get Together, Sell Smarter

## What if everyone in your company

that you needed to close a deal was just a click away? The engineer. The competitive expert. The executive with platinum connections. For companies that deploy collaboration tools, this connectivity is the new sales reality.

Reps no longer have to spend hours tracking down data in multiple apps or hunting for the most up-to-date documents in email, file servers, and intranets. They just have to log into their sales app and hit the collaboration tab. All the relevant documents are clustered around each open opportunity, along with members of the extended sales team, providing unprecedented expertise and visibility into each and every pending deal. With these new tools, questions are answered immediately through company-wide crowd-sourcing, and reps uncover best practices—without ever asking for advice.

### A record number of renewals

Dan Petlon, vice president of IT at Enterasys, was following his usual habit of logging into Salesforce Chatter, his company-wide collaboration app, and reviewing open opportunities when one deal caught his eye. Petlon knew the company because his friend was the CIO. But the Enterasys sales rep wasn't talking to Petlon's friend—he was trying to sell to someone at a lower level.

Petlon introduced the sales rep to the CIO, and together, they closed the deal.



## Chatter accelerates the pace of deal closures.

"We've been able to move deals forward by sharing information that would have been buried if not for Chatter," Petlon explained. "At the end of the quarter, it's very important for us to close maintenance renewal deals, so the manager of the inside sales team was watching them closely. She was able to watch the status of deals change and offer suggestions. We ended up closing a record number of renewals, and I think Chatter helped by accelerating the pace of deal closures."

**Quick tip #7: Participate daily in your employee social network and discover new insights.**

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# Conclusion

There's no doubt that the future of business belongs to the social enterprise—companies that embrace social technologies for employee collaboration and engage with customers across customer social networks—to better listen, analyze, connect, and sell.

For salespeople who embrace new tools and techniques, social technologies create an unprecedented opportunity to offer the right solution at the right time while forming richer, more rewarding relationships. Social customers may have more information than ever before, but so, too, do social salespeople.

During the last few years, salespeople who mastered social technologies have had a competitive advantage. But even if you've just discovered LinkedIn groups and are only now starting to tweet, social media can help you get ahead.

Thanks to new tools that aggregate customer activity on different networks and websites, fantastically rich databases of information are just a few clicks away from any salesperson at any stage of a deal. Contact databases are already being replaced by "social profiles" that include not only a person's job title and email address, but also their most recent tweets, blog posts, and forum comments.

The entire sales channel will soon be animated with social intelligence, reducing friction and fostering smarter deal making. Both buyers and sellers will benefit from having more information. Your customers will have a better understanding of your products, and you'll have a deeper knowledge of their needs.

## About salesforce.com

Salesforce.com is the enterprise cloud computing company that is transforming customers of all sizes into social enterprises with products that boost productivity, increase sales intelligence, and improve company-wide collaboration. In 2011, Forbes Magazine ranked salesforce.com the world's #1 most innovative company. Included in the Salesforce product suite are the following social sales apps:

- Salesforce [Sales Cloud](#), the world's #1 sales app
- Salesforce [Chatter](#), your company's private and secure social network
- Salesforce [Radian6](#), a social media monitoring and engagement platform
- Salesforce [Jigsaw](#), the largest contact database in the cloud

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