4 Essential Imperatives of Virtual Sales Success

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The Coronavirus pandemic, and the limits it has placed on face-to-face interactions, has forced salespeople to reinvent how they do their jobs.

In recent years technological advancements have allowed sellers to interact with buyers in increasingly virtual ways making it difficult for relationships to unfold organically.

Our work, and research, with clients around the world has revealed The Four Virtual Selling Imperatives℠, which are outlined in the new book "Virtual Selling".

Sellers must be proactive, deliberate and "take the lead" in those four areas so as to easily transition from face-to-face to virtual selling.

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Imperative #1: connect

Connecting covers the core of selling: How to develop enough of a trust with buyers so that they're willing to engage in conversations that ultimately lead them to make a purchase.

There are three key areas of connect: a) project professionalism, b) orchestrate conversations and c) develop

rapport.

Sellers need to be someone buyers want to pay attention to and buy from. They can do this by, first, projecting professionalism online and then being deliberate in creating time and space to build rapport.

Finally, sellers need to orchestrate their virtual meetings wherein everything is faster, tighter and more organized. This way buyers will feel like their time was well spent and will want to move forward with the process. To get started, use this virtual selling checklist..

Imperative #2: engage

So many current distractions, both online and off, means it’s much more difficult for sellers to capture and keep buyers’ attention during virtual meetings (a concept we call the Engagement Threshold). That brings us to the second imperative: To engage, you must a) capture attention, b) maximize engagement and c) inspire visually.

In a virtual meeting a strong opening will capture the buyer’s attention right off the bat. But once you have it, you need to keep capturing it.

The secret to keeping buyer engagement is to follow the 30 + 3 rule. You must capture attention in the first 30 seconds and re-achieve engagement every three minutes. Engage by pausing to check in, asking questions or collaborating.

Making smart use of graphs, diagrams and interactive elements is another way to maintain attention. Since virtual selling is inherently a more visual medium, this can be even more effective than with in-person meetings.

Sellers who engage virtually draw buyers into the selling experience and take them on a journey.

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Imperative #3: collaborate

Data from the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research shows that collaboration is critical for sales success.

There are three key areas of collaborating: a) facilitate interaction, b) master technology and c) enable breakthroughs.

Sellers need to take the lead in a virtual setting to involve buyers in a sales discussion and to talk *with* them rather than *at* them. Smooth integration of technology and collaboration tools can make this easier. A simple brainstorming session using screen share to write down everyone's thoughts can be a powerful way to collaborate. When done well, collaborative meetings can lead to breakthroughs that positively affect decision making.

A seller that collaborates well virtually will tap into the buyer's sense of possibility and open the buyer's eyes to new ideas that foster a sense of shared accountability to move the project forward.

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Imperative #4: influence

Influence is at the heart of the sales process. Online and off, sellers are change agents whose main goal is to persuade buyers to do something differently.

The three key areas of Influence are a) persuade virtually, b) strengthen relationships and c) amplify reputation.

It starts with making a series of cases to drive change.

Becoming a relevant influencer comes down to both strategic, and serendipitous, relationship building. For this, you need some deliberate effort over time. Focusing on how you show up online can help you form a strong reputation – someone the buyer wants to get to know better and learn from.

When sellers wield their influence virtually, they drive behavior and promote change. Buyers have more confidence in the process, provide greater access and are more open to the new ideas and different ways of thinking.

Virtual sales success

Focusing on the Four Virtual Selling Imperatives can help sellers to more easily transition from face-to-face to virtual sales. There are challenges inherent in the virtual selling process, but these imperatives will help sellers to build stronger relationships and drive sales, ultimately closing the gap between the online and offline experiences.

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