

# Group 2 - Discussion transcript

## Sales Trends in the Digital Economy

1. What are the key digital trends impacting sales?

Group 2: We'll talk about virtually, the degree of virtuality, and the balance of virtuality. We know sales people now use virtual tools to communicate with a client. So the whole process has changed. Again, the balance of working from home and going back to the office. All the challenges related to the interaction and the human factor that it's kind of different through virtual interactions. Of course, the multiple digital tools, the enterprise social media, as we call them. The pros and cons of social media and how salespeople can use these different platforms to communicate their messages. We had a discussion about artificial intelligence, to what extent it will replace salespeople roles. Chatbots, robots, and all of the roles that will be replaced. Incorporating the role of AI in the client interaction.

2. How are shifting demographics and other trends creating new challenges for sales?

Group 2: We had a discussion about the shifting demographics in sales. We noticed that there is a gap, an age gap, which is also critical. We have young sales people graduating or coming into the arena dealing mostly with older customers and that creates a big gap in the language that they speak in terms of the technology, the language itself given the differences within Canada, we have a francophone area and the rest in anglophone, we have immigrants coming into the game. At Symposium we had a professor of economics who presented the economics of Canada and he spoke a lot about how immigrants will actually fill most of the jobs in Canada. And of course, the knowledge. We talked about how sales people are moving from the boundary spanning role to more like knowledge brokers. How they disseminate the information, and how they are the senders of social networks, etc. How they now have to deal with super well informed clients who get a lot of information through a website and then to what extent they can deal with salespeople and what kind of knowledge they can get. We also talked a little bit about different examples of sales people having a more educational role. Now when they meet the clients down the road they have to really add something to the knowledge of clients that they didn't have before.

3. How do leading organizations create high performing sales tech enabled sales teams?

Group 2: We all know that companies in the middle of covid provided different tools and sources to sales people. That was the immediate reaction. So, resources and sales people in analytics and different tools could be a way. Sales enablement of the roles of different softwares, serum softwares, how we moved to sales enablement softwares and the internal coordination and

cooperation of different departments into facilitating the role of salespeople, which is also the co-premise of sales enablement. Different certifications and training and coaching and webinars keep our sales people informed and well trained about the new tools, about all possible knowledge opportunities, etc.

4. How can we utilize data analytics to improve sales performance?

Group 2: First of all, here comes the critical part of us as educators, is to train and teach sales analytics. So, there is a beginning of understanding. In analytics we need specialists, people who understand data, who are able to sort and are able to analyze and interpret what the story of data is telling and how they can explain this to sales people. Analytics, specialists, and people who understand it is definitely important. Coaching and training of course, for data proficiency, and making sense of data which pertains to sales analytics.

## Sales Education and Research in Canadian Universities

5. What are the knowledge gaps and the implications for teaching and learning, especially in a Canadian context?

Group 2: Pitching sales analytics. I am working in collaboration with other professors on how we can teach sales analytics, what kind of syllabus we can teach, sharing practices with people who will already teach it, I have to say that it is not impossible to teach as a basic level of analytics. Also, we are trying to get the support of USCSA on that so I will have new information regarding that. Teaching sales analytics. Another thing is, other challenges that we all share from our classes is understanding the customer journey and decision making. So, when we talk about the process, we need to make sure that our students understand the whole customer journey and how through this process they will deliver value and add value, etc. We talked a little bit about the attitude and the psychology of sales and coming to your point (participant 5), that, sales has to deal with rejection, high levels of rejection, fear, we know that a big majority they don't close the deal, they go through to final and then at the end they just don't ask the closing question, which is completely crazy. So there is a psychology of sales related also to mental health, motivation, persistence, resilience, and dealing with all the flow of that. Experiential learning and we need to bring industry into our classes. I see that also in my classes, I teach sales and sales management, and I'm talking theoretically, and students cannot relate. I say "yeah, when you get a job in the future, you're going to do this and that...", and they [students] don't get it. So, we need to bring industry in a more experiential learning or through co-op opportunities, which exists here in Ontario, but we don't have it in Quebec. Co-op, it's a great opportunity to make connections. You can start with an internship right away working with all of the things that we discussed in the class. Skill development, beyond knowledge development, we all know the skills that are important for effective sales people. Finally, we need to incorporate technology and social platforms. Let's not forget now the young generation is very familiar with technology but they

will also sell apparently via a platform such as zoom or whatever. And honestly, I was saying that when I was a seller I had my business card and I was presenting my business card to my customers, that doesn't happen anymore. They arrange videos now and they introduce themselves and they do the pitch, and they send that to the customer. That is definitely a new challenge for sales education.

6. What are the key opportunities and challenges of sales education in Canadian universities?

Group 2: The gap between demand and supply of sales jobs. We ask our students “how many of you are interested in sales?” and two or three initially they will say, “I’m interested.”, most of them are probably accidentally in the class or they had no idea or they think that the course is easy to get the credits and graduate. But, eventually, we know and we said it already that 50% or 70% of them are going to get a job in sales. So why are they not interested? And that comes of course with the overall acceptance and respect of the sales job but also the academic. The respect of what we are doing as educators and researchers. We have been bullied by our colleagues, consumer behavior, modelling strategies, etc. We need to establish acceptance and respect. Also, universities need to fund higher and create the capacity. I will also bring to this discussion the importance of doctoral programs. We need to train the future sales researchers and sales educators, if not doctoral, specialized masters programs. And again, sales co-op programs of course. Finally, I would say number one have a real conversation with the real industry and ask what they need, what we can do, what we can deliver, and make them understand that this is a win-win situation. Mentors for sales scholars and we are actually lacking in the infrastructure, such as sales labs. I think we [HEC] are the only ones having a sales lab in Canada, where your students can record, can have their own space and go through the sales funnel in a virtual or simulated environment.