

Xerox Embraces Social Selling to Increase Sales Force Productivity



AN INTERVIEW WITH:

Nicolas Lihou
Head of Global Sales Enablement, Xerox
January 24, 2017

At Xerox, social selling is part of a larger sales enablement program designed to increase sales productivity, resulting in larger contracts and faster closing. At the helm of this program is Nicolas Lihou, Xerox's head of global sales enablement. He recently spoke with eMarketer's Jillian Ryan about how social selling is changing the sales dynamic.

eMarketer: You lead the social selling initiative at Xerox. Can you talk about your goals?

Nicolas Lihou: Yes, social selling is part of the larger sales enablement activity I lead. As with most [business-to-business companies] B2Bs, we are under huge pressure to maximize our sales force productivity, and all the changes in the buying dynamic have significantly changed the way we are doing business.

We are training our sellers to use social media to reach and influence buyers. Social selling helps them become trusted advisors who are more present throughout all stages of the buying cycle.

Sellers are encouraged to be their own brand on social media, while still representing the Xerox company. They become an expert in our domain, and bring value to any discussions and interactions they're having with potential customers or prospects.

eMarketer: How long have you been building your social selling infrastructure?

Lihou: We've been doing social selling for roughly two years. But I think [in 2017 we'll see] a big change in the way of transforming our sales force. We aim to move from traditional sales to digital sales, where social selling is ... a big part of what we're expecting [salespeople] to do.

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media, while still representing the Xerox company.”

We have learned that [social selling] works. Last year, we did a test on a panel of 100 salespeople in both Europe and the US. The results were huge, in terms of impact on the size of the deals our social sellers were able to close. They also executed deals faster than [they would have with] traditional selling.

eMarketer: Is your social selling program aligned with your social marketing program?

Lihou: Many B2Bs are still very confused about the difference between social media marketing and social selling. Social media marketing is really [lifting] awareness of the brand and the offerings. We measure “likes,” number of tweets and other metrics that affect awareness.

Social selling is using that marketing content—targeted by industry and by specific domains—along different steps in the buying journey, and sharing it in a one-on-one relationship. The approach, the actions and the objective are different. [Social selling is] creating an interaction with someone, and [occurs] less through pure awareness of a brand.

eMarketer: You mentioned metrics used for social media marketing. Can you talk about how you are measuring the effectiveness of social selling?

Lihou: We track all engagements and those interesting moments on Salesforce. Everything should be recorded into the [customer relationship management] CRM base, so that we know all the valuable interactions we’re having with the customer or prospect, and how we are influencing [and] creating value.

Interview conducted Jillian Ryan on January 24, 2017.