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## How Ready is Your Organization for the New Social Buyer Persona?

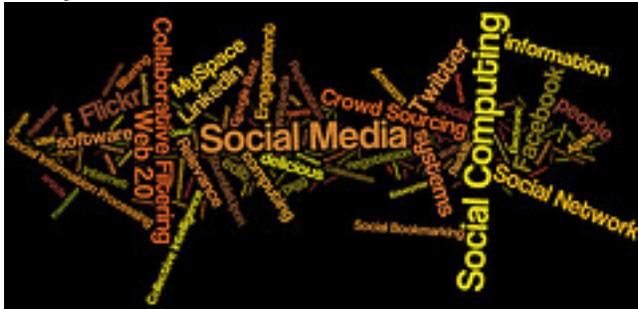


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As we continue to experience the evolution of the social age, one thing we can be sure about is the march of progression will pick up its' steady beat. The evolution or as some may call it - the revolution - will continue to happen and most likely at an increasing rate. The new social buyer is an outcome of this evolution and it has forever changed the dynamics of the seller and buyer relationship.

Buyer behavior most certainly will continue to undergo major transformations each time a new technology is introduced that alters the seller and buyer relationship. Most of what we've witnessed in the past few years has been related to the impact of social media and networking technologies. Here is a key issue facing organizations today: each time a new social technology is introduced, it ultimately alters the buying behaviors of the new social buyer persona. Adding further to the complexity of this issue is that company's today are struggling to keep pace and adapt their marketing and selling teams to the rapid pace of modified buyer behavior.

This issue and the surrounding complexities call into question, for organizations today, their readiness for adapting to the new social buyer persona. There are many associated questions. Have organizations today kept pace with the changes in buying behaviors and patterns? Have they provided the right level of training to marketing and sales on how to adapt to the social buyer persona? Have they a clear idea of who exactly is their social buyer persona? Can they articulate and understand the new social buyer persona? Many questions certainly abound on this issue.

There are five areas of understanding that organizations must achieve to improve their readiness for the new social buyer persona:

***Understand the Social Buyer Persona:*** With companies struggling to keep pace with the rapid changes in buyer behavior, most notably affected by evolving social technologies, the first priority is to gain a new and deep understanding of the social buyer persona. Establishing a new social buyer persona footprint is critical to marketing, sales, and service readiness for the social buyer. Gaining

insights into as well as arriving at a common view of the social buyer persona will not come from traditional research and insight gathering means. Inside-out based research means will reveal very little about buyer behaviors and buying patterns as well as evolving buyer goals. Adopting outside-in expertise in social context-based qualitative research and insight gathering methods are critical to reaching the deeper understanding of the new social buyer persona.

***Understand Evolving Buyer Journeys:*** For years, we have been educated, trained, lectured, and even scolded perhaps about the linear progression of the buying cycle. News flash for those of you who haven't awakened from the brainwashing we've taken over the years - buyers are self-directing their own buyer journeys today. This has profound meaning for keeping pace with understanding the new social buyer persona on two levels. First, how your target social buyer persona utilizes social technologies may look different perhaps every six months - if not shorter. Second, why they choose to take action as well as buy will change periodically because new variables related to social technologies for their own businesses will alter their decision-making. And here is another factor to consider: a social buyer persona may have multiple scenario-based buyer journeys he or she takes thus understanding these different scenarios becomes an imperative.

***Understand Marketing Readiness:*** While content strategy and content marketing have become the new dominant drivers of marketing today, the larger picture of what constitutes marketing strategy in terms of adapting to the new social buyer is on the minds of several CMO's I've talked with recently. Keeping pace with new social technologies and buyer interactions is important to overall marketing strategy. Adaptability must become a new strength for marketing whereas this means a major shift from what we can refer to as the "calendar-based" marketing of yesterday. The marketing strategy you planned to implement six months ago and schedule on the calendar for the existing year could very well be obsolete by the time you get there.

***Understand Sales Readiness:*** The buzz lately in sales readiness has been around the concept of social selling. This is an important concept to establish sales readiness for the new social buyer persona. There are two sides to the same coin when it comes to social selling. What we've seen most prominently is the side of training on social media technologies and how to use these for social selling. The other side of the coin though is how to prepare sales for social buyer readiness. Selling organizations today must have a robust deep understanding of the new social buyer persona in order to achieve the level of engagement desired by both the seller and the buyer. This is perhaps more critical than ever when you factor in that the buyer's "digital body language", as Steve Woods from [Eloqua](#) has written about, continues to evolve and it's alphabet grows at an exponential rate. Improving sales readiness in listening to the new social buyer language of today can be the difference between staying ahead and falling behind.

***Understand Refreshing Readiness:*** In hospital environments, servers are often refreshed on a regular schedule - whether they've experienced problems or not. This happens because server downtime in a hospital environment can result in a life threatening situation. It is critical to the mission of a hospital to never allow this to happen thus servers are constantly refreshed. Similarly, organizations today must adopt such a way of thinking and operating when it comes to understanding the social buyer persona. After first establishing the footprint of a deep understanding of the new social buyer persona through social context-based qualitative efforts, companies must continually "refresh" this understanding in order to achieve the state of social buyer persona readiness. As hospitals deal with the uncertainty of a server failure, organizations must refresh constantly to deal with the uncertainty of changing buyer behaviors related to evolving social technologies. Buying behaviors, patterns, and goals have and will continue to undergo further evolutions. Without adopting an understanding of readiness in the several areas mentioned, B2B as well as B2C organizations risk falling further behind the pace of change in buying behavioral dynamics. It is worth asking again: how ready is your organization for the new social buyer persona?