

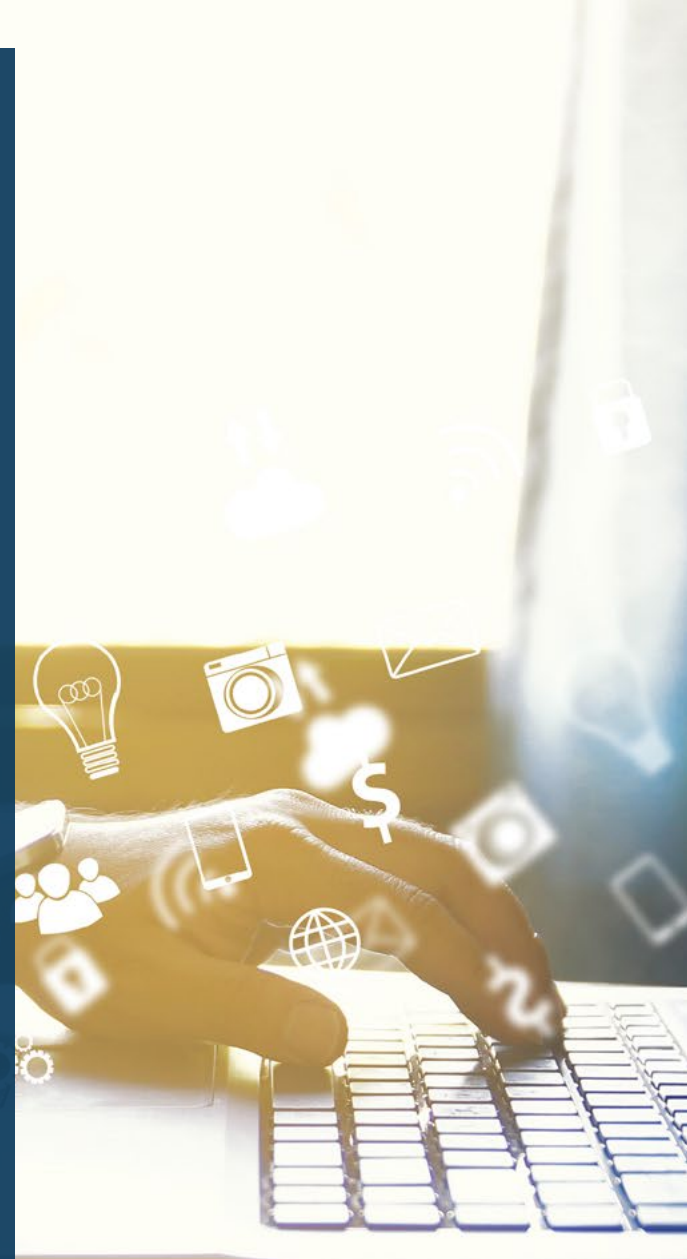


5 STEPS

to Social Selling

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What is Social Selling?

Selling has always been (and always will be) social.

Social media hasn't fundamentally changed the game of sales, but it certainly has amplified it, connected it, and distributed it further than we ever thought possible. Social networks give wider reach and power to even the smallest business, and create an avenue for sales and marketing staff to connect to their client base as individuals, on a personal level.

The term "social selling" encompasses both the research and interaction that happens online during the sales process. Salespeople can use social media to research critical information about companies, trends, and market changes that might produce opportunities. They can learn things about likely buyers that are hard to find elsewhere. What are the interests of those prospects? Their likes, their dislikes? What are they reading and sharing?

When you know a few things about someone, you have a more informed, warmer place to begin a conversation. Building trust with your prospects is crucial in moving them towards a buying decision. The closer we can get to people, the more we can educate them and answer their questions, and the more obvious (and easy) it will be to know when it's time to go offline and close the deal.

Social selling is just **an expanded way to meet people.**

Social selling gets results

LinkedIn's research shows that sales reps who score highly on its "Social Selling Index" (which tracks social activity):

- Find **45%** more sales opportunities
- Are **80%** more productive
- Are **51%** more likely to hit quota

The 2014 Social Buying Study from IDC reported that the buyers who used social channels were more desirable:

- **75%** of B2B buyers and **84%** of C-level/vice president executives use social media to support purchase decisions
- Buyers using social media as part of their buying process were more senior, had 84% bigger budgets, made 61% more purchase decisions, and had influence over a greater span of purchase decisions than those buyers who did not use social media
- See more at: MHI Global.com



And Amar Sheth of Sales4Life says his company's research shows that it costs 75% less to generate leads on social media than on other channels.

The jury is in:

Social selling works today. And it might work even better in the future, as the millennials (people who were born between 1982-2004) grow into business decision makers.

62% of millennials say that if a brand engages with them on social networks, they are more likely to become a loyal customer. They expect brands to not only be on social networks, but to engage them.

(Forbes, 2015)

Incidental Similarities


Social selling is the antithesis of cold calling. You're not dialing (or emailing) for dollars; you're building a personal relationship from the beginning, looking for commonalities and shared interests.

Researchers from the University of British Columbia published a study that shows that incidental similarities between a buyer and seller are enough to establish a personal connection and increase the likelihood to purchase. Incidental similarities include a wide range of possibilities: a shared first name, birthday, or favorite vacation spot.

Incidental similarities create a sense of connection even though they are superficial – and common. For example, in a group of 23 people, the chance two people have the same birthday is greater than 50%. Some companies whose employees interact with large numbers of customers use these potential connections as a tactic: Employees of Disney theme parks and Hilton Hotels wear name tags that include their hometowns, in the hope of leveraging incidental similarity.

As the study authors note, "Social connectedness [is] an underlying mechanism for the effect of incidental similarity." Social media is an ideal mechanism to create that connectedness.





Those incidental similarities can actually shape the situation in terms of your desire to buy and associate with the product or company, your attitude toward the product. It overflows onto the purchase experience – even though, rationally, it really shouldn't.

— **DARREN DAHL**

MARKETING PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
SAUDER SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

5 Steps to Building Relationships with Social Media

1. Connect

Stay alert to opportunities. You could make a connection with anyone you meet, interact with, or run into at a grocery store (you get the picture). Many people you meet will be potential connections or advocates; if you connect with authenticity and transparency, on a personal level, you'll begin to develop a relationship that may pay off later.

Don't sell at this stage, just connect and build a network.

2. Prospect

Prospecting is a continual process. You meet people and evaluate whether there is mutual benefit to building a relationship; if there is, you make a connection. You should add new people to your prospect funnel continually; just as with the sales funnel, some will drop out as time passes.

Prioritize vigilantly, and focus on the most promising prospects.

3. Listen

This step is the most important part of social selling. Monitor your social feeds throughout the day as you're running meetings, building relationships, and closing deals. As companies and prospects in your social funnel are communicating, you will be listening and soaking it all in.

This will help you **learn what's important to them**.

4. Engage

Now that you have the right prospects and you've been listening, you can begin to engage. Start commenting and adding value to prospects' social media posts across various channels. Most companies and professionals don't get many of these engagements, so they will appreciate the added 'bump' your interaction provides, as it reaffirms their own presence on these platforms. (Don't we all love getting a few extra likes and comments?)

Engagement on social media is a process, and it needs to be done across multiple channels. As your trust with the prospect grows, your authority in your space will become stronger. This is a place to separate yourself from the competition.

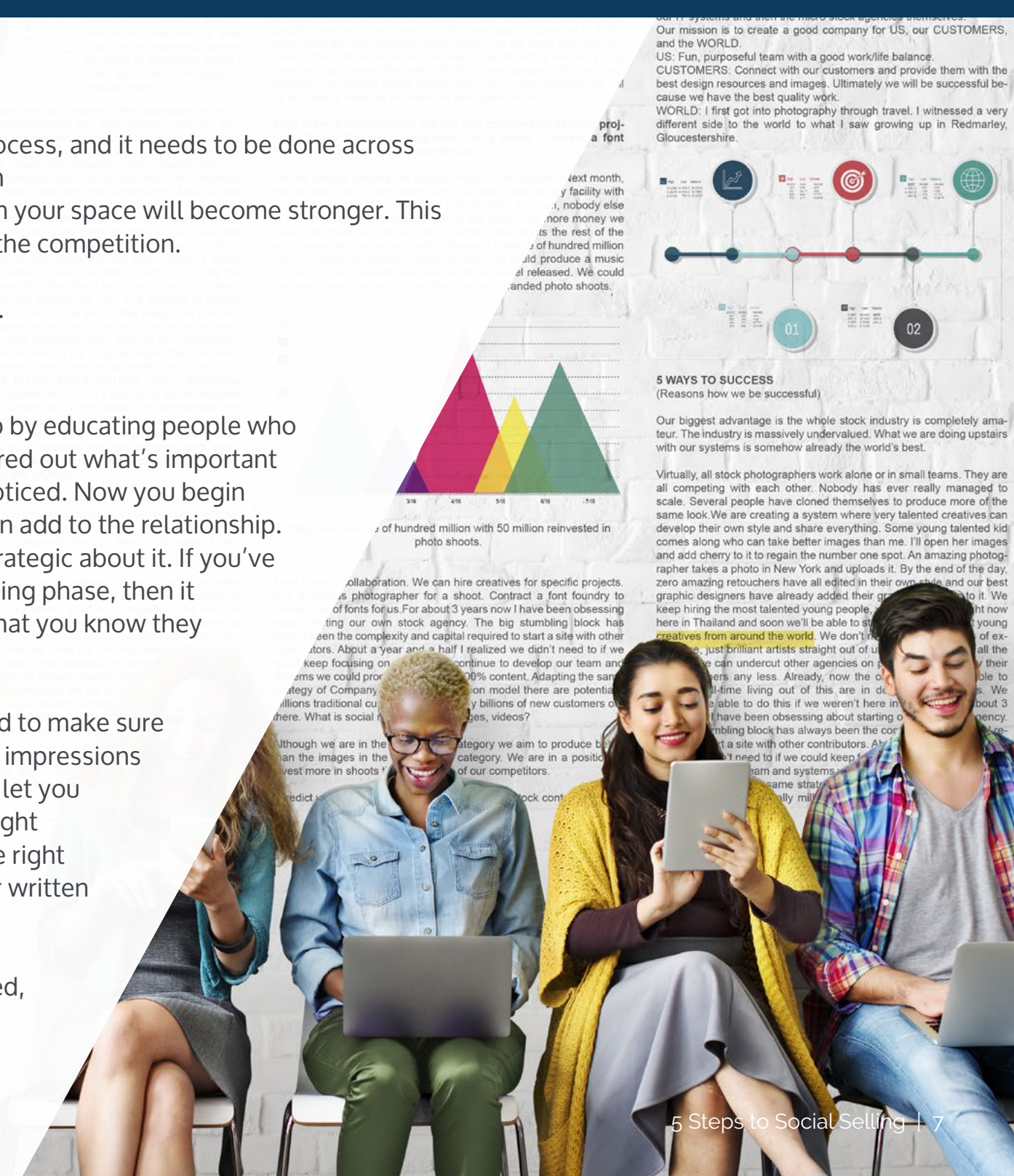
As you engage, you **build credibility**.


5. Add Value

Start contributing to the relationship by educating people who are looking for answers. You've figured out what's important to them and you've started to get noticed. Now you begin demonstrating the value that you can add to the relationship. Start sharing your content and be strategic about it. If you've done your due diligence in the listening phase, then it won't be that hard to post content that you know they will find valuable.

But take care to get it right. You need to make sure that you are adding value – and first impressions are everything. Your prospect won't let you waste their time twice. Deliver the right content, in the right place, and at the right time you'll get lost in the crowd – or written off as irrelevant.

Be smart, be persistent, stay engaged, and **always add value**.





In the sales world, ABC stood for Always Be Closing. Now, ABC means Always Be Connecting, because your connections led to your next hire, your next job, your next lead, and your next close.

— JILL ROWLEY
SOCIAL SELLING EVANGELIST

Network-Specific Best Practices

Each social network has its own community, form, language, etiquette, and best practices. Before you begin to interact and attempt to engage with new prospects, it's wise to invest some time in learning the intricacies of each one.

Here are basic best practices for the major three:



310 million users monthly send 500 million tweets daily, **83%** of which are on mobile.

Start your social selling career here. Twitter is the easiest place to start a conversation and build momentum as you're creating relationships. Once you're comfortable here, it will be easier to start conversations on other social channels.

Key tips:

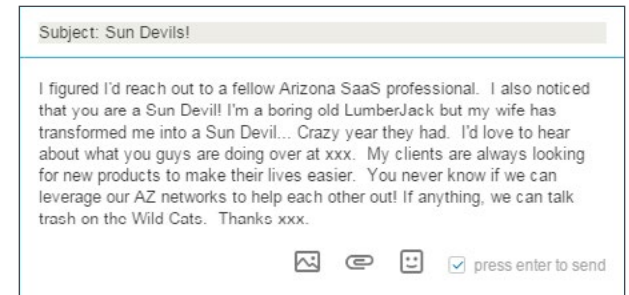
- Hashtags help people with specific interests find your tweets. Don't overuse them; 1-3 is plenty. Treat them like keywords, and research them before you use them.
- Posting and interacting should be a continuous process. You almost can't overdo Twitter, since the interactions are so quick and small. Always be connected!
- Use your 140 characters wisely. If you can't say it quickly on Twitter, you can't say it at all. And: Tweets **shorter than 100 characters have a 17% higher engagement rate.**
- Make sure you add a comment when retweeting. Do more than just a generic compliment.
- Make sure to mention (@theirname) users when linking to content they have created or shared; this will notify them that you mentioned them.

LinkedIn

With close to **400 million users**, LinkedIn is a prime place for prospecting.

Key Tips

- Posting too often here can go poorly; once a day is plenty.
- Make sure that your content is on message and stays work-related. Language should be more professional as well.
- Write personal connection requests, and mention the reason why you are connecting with them. Generic “I’d like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn” is not enough to sway prospects, and can be perceived as a rude way to introduce yourself. Notice how the principle of incidental similarities is applied in the note on the left.



Facebook

As of April 2016, Facebook had **1.59 billion** monthly active users. Lots of them are friends-and-family, but businesses are increasingly getting traction.

Key Tips

- Hashtags are available on Facebook, but they are not necessarily used for the same topics as they are on Twitter. Make sure to check the talk tracks before using one.
- You can use more conversational wording on Facebook, as it is a more personal network than LinkedIn.
- Storytelling is a strong performer on this network, so make sure to focus on sharing stories on your opinion and your voice. Post more like a person and less like a business.
- Make sure that you add value when commenting on a post. A good way to do this is to ask questions or look for opinions, and start a discussion when possible.

Helpful Technologies to Manage Social Selling

When you begin **social selling**, you can't jump straight into automating your processes. You'll need to focus on figuring out how to participate in a social conversation, and getting connections through LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. It's a hands-on process, and you'll probably try different things before you settle on what works for you. Once you've developed habits and patterns of success, you can begin to automate some of the steps.

Social selling technologies to get you started

These three are all easy and simple to use, and are free (or nearly so). They work well as **starter technologies for social selling**, and for many smaller teams they might be all you'll ever need.

1. Use BufferApp to schedule posts

Buffer is completely free for a single account. It allows you to create and schedule posts, as well as gives access to basic analytics for reviewing engagement. You can shuffle your posts (mix them up in random order) and your posting times, too.

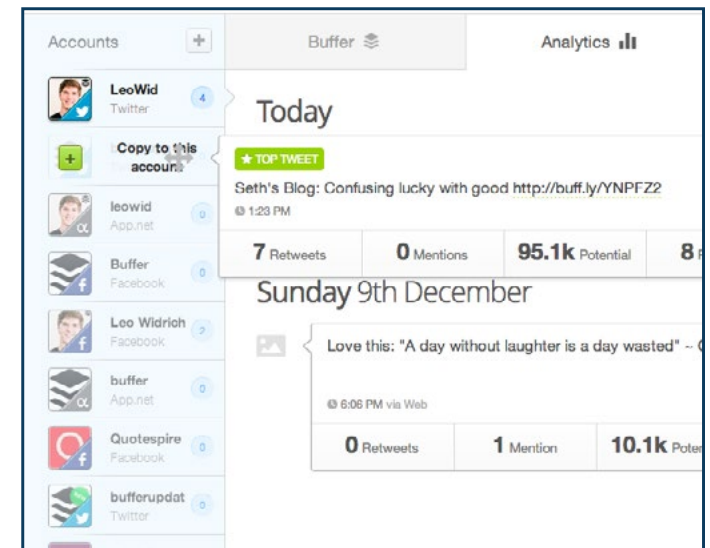
Buffer can connect you to LinkedIn, Google+, Facebook, & Twitter. You can automate all your posts to the different channels.

Simple Buffer strategy:

Add RSS feeds and pull in content that is geared towards your audience. Make sure you add hashtags to your tweets and pictures to increase engagement.

Be careful not to post too much on Facebook, Google+, and LinkedIn as it can hurt your engagement. How much is too much? You can generate a lot of activity, but hundreds and hundreds of posts tends to look spammy. Here's a reasonable schedule:

- Facebook: 2 posts daily; one positive quote, one article
- LinkedIn and Google+: 3 times daily, 4–5 hours apart
- Twitter: 5–10 times daily, or more, depending on what's new or hot



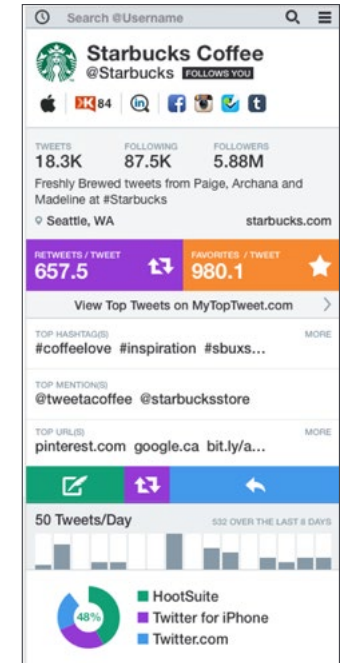
2. Use Riffle (By CrowdRiff) to research people

Riffle allows you to drill into anyone's profile and see what other social channels they are plugged into. You can then connect directly to their LinkedIn, Klout, Google+, Instagram, and Facebook. This tool can save countless hours in the prospecting process, and can lead to much better efficiency in sales teams.

Simple Riffle strategy:

Leverage Riffle to see where people are from, what's important to them, and which hash tags they use most often. You can also see what type of activity the user has on Twitter. **This activity can be a great indicator as to whether this contact is worth interacting with or not.**

Engaging on Twitter can take time, as the interactions will be frequent; you want to make sure you are spending your time with a human that's active and genuinely interested, as this will increase your odds of more successful interactions.

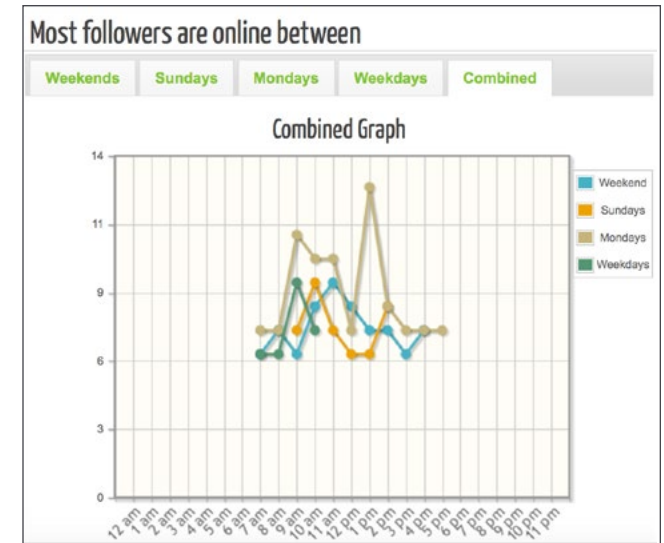


3. Use Tweriod to research best posting times

Tweriod is a simple Twitter app that takes about 15 seconds to plug into your Twitter account. It dives into your account and identifies the times that you get your best engagements. Success on social (beyond being real and interesting) is all data based. It's really powerful, and lets you "fish when the fish are biting."

Simple Tweriod strategy:

When you schedule your posts in Buffer, use your insight from Tweriod to determine what times are best to tweet. Timing is everything on Twitter for impressions and engagement.



At the End of the Day...

...social selling is about building relationships. Relationships that last, that change and adapt over time, and that are mutually beneficial.

Marketing and salespeople can use social media as a channel to provide value to their prospects. Social is a very good way to make your knowledge, your company, and your helpfulness known, and to demonstrate consistency. This creates a level of trust that can lead to proactive engagement from your prospect. People buy from people, not companies, after all; next to events and other face-to-face methods, social media is the best channel for beginning relationships – and social scales better.

The last thing to remember is: Once you've gotten into a natural conversation to build a relationship, then you need to figure out when to move the discussion offline – which is where the selling should start from a conversation perspective. Your prospect probably won't go there with you unless they have genuine interest, and by now you've both figured out how real the opportunity is and whether there's actual value for your buyer.

Act-On's **Advanced Social Media Module** provides you everything you need to produce, manage, nurture, and measure your day-to-day B2B social media activities.

With Act-On at your side, momentum can be yours as you build brand awareness, gain a loyal audience, and convert them into engaged customers. [Learn More](#)



Keep Learning: Resources

Social selling is always evolving, and it's worth a few minutes a week to stay current and sharpen your techniques. Here are a few people we recommend you consider following:

Miles Austin

CEO, Fill the Funnel ([@MilesAustin](#))

www.fillthefunnel.com

Timothy Hughes

Social Selling Influencer ([@Timothy_Hughes](#))

Social Selling: Techniques to Influence Buyers and Changemakers

Gerry Moran

Global Head of Social Media & Content, Cognizant Technology ([@GerryMoran](#))

www.marketingthink.com

Jill Rowley

Founder and Chief Evangelist, #SocialSelling ([@jill_rowley](#))

<http://jillrowley.com/home>

Gabe Villamizar

Social Selling Director, HireVue ([@GabeVillamizar](#))

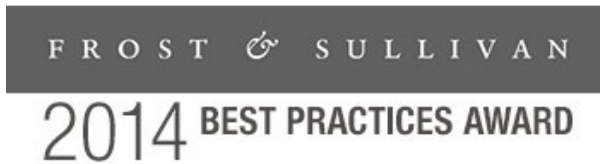
embedsocialselling.com



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<http://www.jackkosakowski.com/>

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About Act-On Software

Act-On Software is a marketing automation company delivering innovation that empowers marketers to do the best work of their careers. Act-On is the only integrated workspace to address the needs of the customer experience, from brand awareness and demand generation, to retention and loyalty. With Act-On, marketers can drive better business outcomes and see higher customer lifetime value. The Act-On platform provides marketers with power they can actually use, without the need for a dedicated IT resource.

Connect with us to learn more